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Homer in Chios. An epopee



*C. N. S.*

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# HOMER IN CHIOS.

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**An Epopee**

**BY**

**DENTON J. SNIDER.**

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**ST. LOUIS.  
SIGMA PUBLISHING CO.,  
210 PINE STREET,  
1891.**



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## CONTENTS.

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I. MNEMOSYNE.	
The Making of the Poet. . . . .	5
II. CALLIOPE.	
The Call of the Muse. . . . .	27
III. EUTERPE.	
The Daughter of Homer. . . . .	47
IV. ERATO.	
The Stranger of Northland. . . . .	63
V. CLIO.	
The Travels of Homer. . . . .	85
VI. TERPSICHORE.	
The Pedagogue Chian. . . . .	113
VII. MELPOMENE.	
The Singer of Ascra. . . . .	131
VIII. THALIA.	
The Songstress of Lesbos. . . . .	149
IX. POLYHYMNIA.	
The Psalmist of Israel. . . . .	173
X. URANIA.	
The Marriage. . . . .	201



I.

**Mnemosyne.**

*The Making of The Poet.*

## ARGUMENT.

*HOMER, the poet, having returned in old age to Chios, his birth-place, an island not far from the coast of Asia Minor, tells the story of his early life to his pupils. Two chief influences wrought upon his childhood. The first was that of the smith, Chalcon, who was both artisan and artist — both vocations in early times were united in one man — and who revealed to the budding poet the forms of the Gods. The second influence was that of his mother, Crethéis (name given by Herodotus, Vita Hom). She was the depository of fable and folk-lore, which she told to her boy in the spirit of a poet, and which are the chief materials of his two great poems. So Homer reaches back to his earliest years by the aid of Mnemósyne (memory), who according to Hesiod (Theogon. 915) was the mother of the Nine Muses.*

“Fair was the day when I first peeped into the  
workshop of Chalcon,  
Chalcon, the smith, who wrought long ago in the  
city of Chios;  
Now that day is the dawn of my life, which I yet  
can remember,  
All my hours run back to its joy as my very be-  
ginning,  
And one beautiful moment then let in the light  
of existence,  
Starting within me the strain that thrills through  
my days to this minute!  
Still the old flash I can see as I peeped at the  
door of the workshop,  
Memory whispers the tale of the rise of a world  
that I saw there  
Memory, muse of the past, is whispering faintly  
the story.

(7)

Chalcon the smith, far-famed in the sun-born  
island of Chios,  
Stood like a giant and pounded the bronze in the  
smoke of his smithy,  
Pounded the iron until it would sing in a tune  
with the anvil,  
Sing in a tune with the tongs and the anvil and  
hammer together,  
Making the music of work that rang to the ends  
of the city.  
Figures he forced from his soul into metal, most  
beautiful figures,  
Forced them by fury of fire beneath cunning  
strokes of the hammer;  
As he thought them, he wrought them to loveliest  
forms of the living,  
Wrought them to worshipful shapes of the Gods,  
who dwell on Olympus.  
That was when I was still but a child in the home  
of my mother,  
Sole dear home of my life, the home of Crethéis  
my mother !  
Only two doors from his shop with its soot stood  
her clean little cottage,  
Vainly she strove to restrain her clean little boy  
from the smithy,  
But he would slip out the house and away, as  
soon as she washed him,  
Off and away to the forge just where the smutch  
was the deepest.

How I loved the great bellows puffing its breath  
on the charcoal!  
And the storm of the sparkles that lit up the  
smithy with starlight!  
And the hiss of the iron red-hot when thrust into  
water!  
Greatest man in the world I deemed at that time  
to be Chalcon,  
And his smithy to me rose up a second Olym-  
pus,  
Where the Gods and the Heroes I saw move forth  
into being;  
Him too deemed I divine, like Hephæstus, a God  
in his workshop.  
As he thought, so he wrought — he pounded and  
rounded the metal  
Till it breathed and would move of itself to a  
corner and stand there,  
Till it spoke, and speaking would point up beyond  
to Immortals.  
Bare to the waist and shaggy the breast of the  
big-boned Chalcon,  
As it heaved with an earthquake of joy in the  
shock of creation;  
Thick were the thews of his arm and balled at  
each blow till his shoulder,  
At the turn of his wrist great chords swelled out  
on his fore-arm,  
One huge hand clasped the grip of the tongs in  
its broad bony knuckles,



Th'other clutched hold of the sledge and whirled  
it around by the handle;  
Shutting his jaws like a lion, and grating his  
teeth in his fury,  
Whirled he the ponderous sledge to hit in the  
heat of the iron;  
While the veins underneath would heave up the  
grime on his forehead,  
Smote he the might of the metal with all the grit  
of a Titan;  
Working mid flashes of flame that leaped out the  
belly of darkness,  
Smote he and sang he a song in response to the  
song of his hammer."

So spake aged Homerus, the bard, as he sat in  
his settle,  
Where grew a garden of fruit, the fig and the  
pear and the citron,  
Grapes suspended in clusters and trees of the  
luscious pomegranate.  
He had returned to his home with a life full of  
light and of learning;  
Wandering over the world, he knew each country  
and city,  
Man he had seen in the thought and the deed, the  
Gods he had seen too;  
Home he had reached once more, the violet  
island of Chios,  
Blind, ah blind, but with sight in his soul and a  
sun in his spirit.

Youths were standing around him and hearkened  
to what he was telling,  
Bright-eyed youths, who had come to his knees  
from each region of Hellas,  
Homerids hopeful of song, the sons of the genius  
of Homer,  
By the new tale of Troy inspired, they sought to  
make measures,  
Striving to learn of the master to wield the  
hexameter mighty,  
As high Zeus the thunderbolt wields in a flash  
through the Heavens,  
Leaping from cloud unto cloud and leaving long  
lines of its splendor,  
Rolling the earth in its garment of resonant  
reverberation.  
Luminous too was the look of the boys, lit up  
by the Muses,  
Eager they turned to the sage, and begged for  
the rest of his story;  
Soon into musical words he began again spinning  
his life-thread:

“Chalcon, the smith, was the maker of Gods  
in the smoke of his smithy!  
Out of darkness he wrought them, out of chaos  
primeval,  
Striking great blows that lit up the night with  
the sparks of creation

Which would flash from his mind into metal  
through strokes of the hammer.  
Aye, and the maker of me in his Gods he was  
also — that Chalcon;  
He perchance did not know it — the world he  
was mightily making.  
All the Graces he wrought into shape, and loved  
as he wrought them,  
And the Fates he could form in his need, though  
he never did love them,  
But the snake-tressed Furies he banished in hate  
from his workshop.  
I could always forecast what he wrought and  
whether it went well,  
Whether full freely the thought ran out of his  
soul to the matter,  
For he would sing at his work an old Prome-  
thean ditty.  
Tuneful, far-hinting it poured from his soul into  
forms of his God-world,  
Strong deep notes which seemed to direct each  
sweep of the hammer,  
Just at the point where a stroke might finish the  
work of the master,  
Or a blow ill-struck might shatter a year of his  
labor.  
Then bright notes would well from within as he  
filed and he chiseled,  
Seeking to catch and to hold in a shape the  
gleam of his genius.

Battles he pictured in silver and gold on the  
shield of the warrior,  
Corselets he plaited in proof and swords he  
forged for the Hero,  
Many a goblet he made wreathed round with the  
frolic of Bacchus,  
All the Gods he could fashion to life, in repose  
and in motion,  
Their high shapes he could call from his soul, to-  
gether and singly,  
Call with their godhood down from the heights of  
the radiant Heavens,  
Till the dingy old smithy shot into Olympian  
sunshine.  
Chalcon, Oh Chalcon, me thou hast formed in  
forming Immortals,  
And the song of thy hammer I hear in the ring  
of my measures,  
Oft I can feel thee striking thy anvil still in my  
heart-strokes,  
Which are forging my strains like thee when thou  
smotest the metal,  
Till it rang and it sang the strong tune of the  
stress of thy labor.  
Chalcon, thy workshop went with me in every  
turn of my travel,  
Through the East and the West of wide Hellas,  
through island and mainland,  
Through the seas in the storm, through mount-  
ains rolling in thunder,

With me it went in my wandering, e'en to the  
top of Olympus:  
Never thy shapes shall fade from the sight of my  
soul, Oh Chalcon."

Quickly the poet turned round in his seat and  
said to his servant:  
"Come, Amyntas my boy, now bring some wine  
in my goblet,  
Chian wine in my goblet wrought by the cunning  
of Chalcon,  
Which he gave to me once when I sang him my  
earliest measures,  
Round which are dancing the youths at the tast-  
ing the must of the wine-press,  
While the God overgrown with leaves and with  
vines looks laughing;  
Chalcon gave it me once as a prize when I sang  
in his workshop,  
Sang him my earliest measures in tune to the  
strokes of his hammer."

Beardless Amyntas, the cup bearer, brought the  
chalice of Chian,  
Choicest of wine, that sparkled and danced on  
the rim of the chalice,  
Draught of the sea, and the earth, and the sun-  
shine together commingled,  
Liquid poesy, stealthily sung in each drop by the  
wine-god.

Softly the singer sipped off the glittering beads  
of the beaker,  
Touching his lip to the line where the rim and  
the brim come together,  
Where flash twinkles of joy and laugh in the eye  
of the drinker.  
That was the essence of Chios distilled from  
the heart of her mountains,  
Tempered hot in the fires that smoulder still in  
the soil there,  
Drawn by the grape into drops that shoot into  
millions of sparkles,  
Generous vintage of Chios, renewing the heart of  
the singer.

When his thirst he had slaked and his thought  
had returned to his thinking,  
Sweetly he lowered his voice to the note of a musical whisper,  
And he bent forward his body as if he were  
telling a secret:  
“Once, I remember, Chalcon was making a group  
of the Muses,  
Sacred givers of song, to be borne to a festival  
splendid,  
Where each singer had in their presence to  
sing for the laurel.  
What do you think he did as I stood with him  
there in the smithy?

Me he turned into bronze, and put me among the  
Nine Sisters,  
As if I their young brother might be, their one  
only brother;  
In the center he placed me, aye in the heart of  
the Muses,  
Sweet Calliope kissed me there in the workshop  
of Chalcon,  
Even in bronze I could feel her embrace on that  
day—I now feel it—  
And I could hear her soft breathings that told of  
the deeds of the Heroes.  
Still I can feel, e'en though I be old, the kiss of  
the Muses,  
And at once I respond to their music in words of  
my measures,  
Yielding my heart and my voice to their prompt-  
ings and gentle persuasion.  
O good Chalcon, memory keeps thee alive, as I  
love thee!  
Keeps thee working in me as the maker who is  
the poet;  
Ever living thou art in thy glorious shapes of  
Immortals,  
Though thou, a mortal by Fate, hast gone to the  
Houses of Hades,  
Whither I too must soon go—the call I can  
hear from the distance,  
I too a mortal by Fate must pass to the shades  
of my Heroes.”

There he paused on the tremulous thought of a  
hope and a sorrow,  
And the sweet word died away on his lips thrown  
far in the future.  
Hark! the voice of a song creeps into the house  
of Homerus,  
Filling his home with love and with life to the  
measure of music,  
Fresh from the youth of the heart, the fountain  
of hope everlasting.  
Though unseen the sweet singer, hidden in  
leaves of an arbor,  
All the youths well knew who it was, and stood  
for a moment,  
Bating the breath and bending the head to listen  
the better,  
And to quaff each note to the full, for the voice  
that was singing  
Poured out the soul of a maiden, the beautiful  
daughter of Homer,  
Whom those boys were more eager to hear than  
to study their verses,  
Aye, more eager to hear the daughter than  
hearken the father.

He, when the strain had ceased, with a sigh  
broke into the silence:  
“Ah! the fleet years! how like is that note to  
the note of my mother,



As she hymned to her work or sang me to sleep  
on her pallet!  
Early my father had died, his face I no longer  
remember,  
But the voice which speaks when I speak from  
my heart is always —  
Well do I know it — the voice of my mother,  
Crethéis my mother ! ”

Overmastered a moment by tears, he soon  
overmastered  
All of the weaker man in himself, and thus he  
proceeded:  
“ I was telling the tale of the wonderful work-  
shop of Chalcon,  
Where I saw all the deities rise into form in  
a rapture,  
Coming along with their sunshine to stand in the  
soot of the smithy,  
Happy Olympian Gods who once fought and put  
down the dark Titans.  
Bearing their spell in my soul, I always went  
home to my mother,  
And I would beg her to tell me who were the  
Gods and the Muses,  
All this beautiful folk whom Chalcon had brought  
from the summits,  
From free sunny Olympus down into the smoth-  
ering smithy.

She would begin with a glow in her eyes and tell  
me their story,  
Meanwhile plying the distaff — she never could  
help being busy —  
All of their tales she knew, by the hundreds and  
hundreds she knew them,  
Tales of the beings divine, once told of their  
dealings with mankind,  
When they came to our earth and visibly mingled  
with mortals.  
New was always the word on the tongue of  
Crethéis my mother,  
Though she dozens of times before had told the  
same story,  
Still repeating when I would call for it, ever re-  
peating,  
For a good tale, like the sun, doth shine one day  
as the other. /  
What a spell on her lip when up from her lap I  
was looking,  
Watching her mouth in its motion, whence drop-  
ped those wonderful stories!  
Oft I thought I could pick up her word in my  
hand as it fell there,  
Keep it and carry it off, for my play a most beau-  
tiful plaything,  
Which I could toss on the air when I chose, like  
a ball or an apple,  
Catch it again as it fell in its flight, for the word  
was a thing then.

Mark! what I as a child picked up, the old man  
still plays with:  
Words made of breath, but laden with thought  
more solid than granite,  
Pictures of heroes in sound that lasts, when  
spoken, forever,  
Images fair of the world and marvelous legends  
aforetime,  
All of them living in me as they fell from the  
lips of my mother."

There he stopped for a moment and passed his  
hand to his forehead,  
As if urging Mnemosyne now for the rest of  
the story;  
Soon came the Muse to the aid of the poet, and  
thus he continued:  
"How she loved the songs of old Hellas, and  
loved all its fabling!  
Well she could fable herself and color her speech  
with her heart-beats.  
I have known her to make up a myth which  
spread through all Chios,  
Thence to island and mainland wherever Hellenic  
is spoken.  
Once I heard far out by the West in a town of  
Zakynthus,  
At a festival one of her lays, which I knew in  
my cradle,

Sung by the bard of the town as his guerdon of  
song from the Muses.  
And now let me confess, too, my debt, the debt  
of my genius!  
Many a flash of the fancy is hers which you read  
in my poems,  
Many a roll of the rhythm, and many a turn of  
the language,  
Many a joy she has given, and many a tear she  
has dropped there,  
Merciful sighs at the stroke of grim Fate on the  
back of the mortal —  
All are remembrances fallen to me from the lips  
of my mother.”

For a moment he ceased, till he gathered his  
voice into firmness,  
Smoothing the tremulous trill that welled from  
his heart into wavelets,  
Smoothing and soothing the quivering thoughts  
which Memory brought him:  
“Hard was her lot, she had to work daily  
through Chios by spinning,  
For herself and her boy she fought the rough  
foes of existence,  
Making her living by toil that flew from the tips  
of her fingers,  
Deft and swift in the cunning which gives all  
its worth unto labor.

Yet more cunning she showed in spinning the  
    threads of a story  
Till they all came together forming a garment of  
    beauty,  
Than in twirling the distaff and reeling the yarn  
    from the spindle.  
But she too, my poor mother, was laid in the  
    earth, as was fated,  
For the Fates span out the frail thread of her  
    life at their pleasure.”

Here again the old man made a stop with a  
    gaze in his features  
As if prying beyond to behold the unspeakable  
    secret;  
But he came back to himself with a joy in his  
    look and continued :  
“ It was she who gave me the love and the lore  
    of the legend,  
Training my youth to her song which throbbed  
    to the best of the ages —  
All the great men of the Past and great women,  
    the mothers of Heroes.  
Do you know it was she who first told me the  
    story of Thetis —  
Thetis the Goddess-Mother, whose son was the  
    Hero Achilles?  
Tenderly told she the tale of the boy who was  
    born to do great things,

Who from his birth had in him the spark divine  
of his mother,  
Though he had to endure all the sorrow of being  
a hero,  
Suffer the pang that goes with the gift of the  
Gods to a mortal.  
Then in a frenzy of hope she would clasp me  
unto her bosom,  
Dreaming the rest of her dream in the soft in-  
spiration of silence,  
Yet you could see what it was by the light that  
was lit in her presence,  
See it all by the light of her soul that shone from  
her visage.  
Once in her joy she arose with her arms out-  
stretched mid her story,  
Showing how Thetis arose from the deeps in a  
cloud o'er the billow,  
That she, the Goddess, might secretly take her  
son to her bosom,  
To impart what was best of herself — the godlike  
endurance —  
And to arouse in him too the new valor to meet  
the great trial.  
O fond soul of my mother, how well that day  
I remember,  
When thou toldest the tale of the bees that flew  
to my cradle,  
Dropping out of the skies on a sudden along with  
the sunbeams,

Humming and buzzing through all of the house  
as if they were swarming,  
Till they lit on my lips as I slept but never once  
stung me,  
Never stung thee, though running around in thy  
fright to defend me,  
Smiting and slashing with stick or with rag or  
whatever came handy,  
Scorching at last their leathery wings with their  
own waxen tapers !  
But ere they flew, in spite of the fire and fight of  
the household,  
They had left on my lips their cells of the clear-  
flowing honey,  
Honey clear-flowing and sweet, though bitter the  
struggle to give it;  
Even the bees had to pay for giving the gift of  
their sweetness.

Then wert thou happy, Cretheis, then wert thou  
sad too, my mother,  
Pensive, forethinking afar on what the God had  
intended,  
Who had sent the dumb bee to speak as a sign  
unto mortals.  
What thy son was to do and endure flashed into  
thy vision,  
Double that flash of the future, joyful, sorrow-  
ful also,

And thou didst say to thyself and the God, bending  
over to kiss me:

‘ Let it fall — the lot of his life ; I feel what is  
coming :

He must distil from the earth into speech all the  
sweetness of living,

He must pour from his heart into song all the  
nectar of sorrow ;

Let it fall — the lot of his life ; though hard be  
the trial,

Always there will be left on his lips the hive of  
its honey.’ ”





II.

## Calliope.

*The Call of The Muse.*

(27)

## ARGUMENT.

*Homer now tells the third chief influence which helped make him a poet. This influence was the bard of the town, Ariston, who sang on the borderland between East and West, but was not able to sing of the great conflict between Troy and Greece. It was Ariston who suggested this theme to Homer, and bade the youth go out to the sea-shore, where was the cave of the Muses, and listen to the voice which would speak to him there. Calliope, the epic Muse, appears to him, tells him what he must do and suffer, and inspires him with his great vocation. He goes home to his mother and tells her what the Muse has said to him; his mother after a short internal struggle, bids him go at once and follow the call of the Muse.*

Thus to the whisper of fleeting Mnemosyne,  
mother of Muses,  
Homer was yielding his heart and shaping her  
shadowy figures.  
While he was speaking, rose up the roar of the  
sea in the distance,  
Which an undertone gave to his measures, mighty,  
majestic,  
Wreathing the roll of its rhythm in words of the  
tale he was telling,  
Giving the musical stroke of its waves to the  
shore of the island,  
Giving the stroke for the song to the beautiful  
island of Chios.  
All the sea was a speech, and spoke in the lan-  
guage of Homer,

Aye, the Ægean spoke Greek, and sang the re-  
frain of great waters,  
All the billows were singing that day hexameters  
rolling,  
Rolling afar from the infinite sea to the garden  
of Homer.

Stopped in the stretch of his thought the poet  
lay back in his settle,  
Seemingly lost in the maze where speech fades out  
into feeling ;  
He was silent awhile, though not at the end of  
his story.  
Aged and blind he was now, recalling the days  
of his boyhood,  
When he saw all the world of fair forms, as it  
rose up in Hellas,  
Rise from the hand of the smith and rise from  
the lips of his mother,  
Saw too himself in the change of the years be-  
coming the singer.

Soon spake a youth at his side, it was the best  
of his pupils,  
Called Demodocus, son of Demodocus, Ithacan  
rhapsode,  
Who belonged to an ancestry born into song from  
old ages :  
“Did you have no bard of the village, no teacher  
of measures,

Who could melt the rude voice of the people to  
rhythm of music?  
Men of that strain we have in our Ithaca, they  
are my clansmen.  
Still I follow the craft, and to thee, best singer,  
I come now,  
That I be better than they, far better in song  
than my fathers.”

Here he suddenly stopped and glanced out into  
the garden,  
For there flitted an airy form of a maid in the  
distance,  
Going and coming amid the flowers — the  
daughter of Homer,  
Whom Demodocus loved and sought as the meed  
of his merit,  
He would carry away not only the verse of the  
master,  
But would take, in the sweep of his genius, also  
the daughter.  
Yet the maiden held off, declaring the youth was  
conceited.

But the father in words of delight replied to  
his scholar:  
“ Well bethought ! a good learner ! thou thinkest  
ahead of the teacher !  
Just of the bard I was going to speak, he rose in  
my mind’s eye

Suddenly with thy question — the face and the  
form of Ariston.  
Every day I went to the place of the market to  
hear him —  
Deep-toned Ariston, the singer of praises to Gods  
and to Heroes,  
Chanting the fray and the valorous deed in the  
ages aforetime,  
While the crowd stood around in reverent si-  
lence and listened.  
He was the bard of the town, he knew what had  
been and will be,  
Knew the decree of Zeus and could read it out of  
the Heavens,  
Knew too, the heart of man, and could tell every  
thought in its throbbing.  
At the festivals sang he through all of the ham-  
lets of Chios,  
He was the voice of the isle, the mythical hoard  
of old treasures;  
Song and story and fable, even the jest and the  
riddle —  
All were his charge and his choice, by the care  
and the call of the Muses.  
High beat his heart as he poured out its music  
singing of Heroes,  
Every word of his voice was a tremulous pulse-  
beat of Hellas,  
Doomful the struggle he saw in the land and fate-  
ful its Great Men.

Often he sang the sad lot of Bellerophon, hero  
of Argos,  
Who once crossed to the Orient, leaving the  
mainland of Europe,  
Quitting his home in the West for the charm of  
a Lycian maiden,  
Daughter fair of the king who dwelt by the ed-  
dying Xanthus.  
Many a demon he slew, destroying the shapes of  
the ugly,  
Savages tamed he to beautiful law, and the law,  
too, of beauty,  
Monsters, Chimeras, wild men and wild women  
he brought to Greek order,  
Amazons haters of husbands, and Solymi mount-  
aineers shaggy.  
But the Hero, for such is his fate, sank to what  
he subjected,  
In the success of his deed he lapsed and fell under  
judgment,  
Hateful to Gods is success, though much it is  
loved by us mortals,  
Victory is the trial, most hard in the end to the  
victor.

Such was the strain of Ariston, here on the  
borderland singing  
Where two continents stand and look with a scowl  
at each other  
Over the islanded waters, ready to smite in the  
struggle.



Every Greek in our Chios then heard Bellerophon's echo,  
Heard in the deep-sounding name of the Hero an echo that thrilled him,  
Felt in his bosom the reverberation of Bellerophontes,  
For he could find in himself the same peril of lapsing from Hellas,  
Sinking to Asia back from the march of the world to the westward."

Sympathy touched in its tenderest tone the voice of Homerus,  
As his words sank down at the end of the line to a whisper,  
Then to a silence, the silence of thought, which spoke from his presence.  
What was the matter with Homer, and why that shadow in sunshine?  
Did he find in his own Greek soul a gleam of the danger?  
Did his poetical heart then enter the trance of temptation?  
He must respond to the passion, aye to the guilt, in his rapture,  
He must glow with the deed of the Hero, even the wrongful,  
Never forgetting the law, and sternly pronouncing the judgment,

Soon he rallied and rose, and his voice returned  
with his story :  
“ Well I knew the old man and eagerly stored up  
his treasures,  
Aged Ariston loved me, and made me his daily  
companion,  
I was his scholar, perchance, as ye are now in my  
training.  
Once in a mutual moment of freedom I ventured  
to ask him :  
‘ O my Ariston, sing me to-day the new song  
of our nation,  
Born of the deed, the last great deed we have all  
done together,  
All the Hellenes have done it, methinks, in the  
might of one impulse,  
Fighting our destiny’s fight to possess and pre-  
serve the new future,  
Saving the beautiful woman and saving ourselves  
in her safety ;  
That is the deed of Troy and its lay of the Hero  
Achilles !  
Seek not so far for an action when near in thy  
way is the greatest.’

Thus I spake, and his face on the spot turned  
into a battle.  
‘ Ah ! ’ he replied ‘ too near me it lies, just  
that is the hindrance !

I must leave it behind to another, for I cannot  
touch it;  
Still my heart is cleft by that terrible struggle  
asunder,  
Wounded I was in the strife, remediless still I am  
bleeding,  
Cureless I feel it to be — that wound of the  
Greeks and the Trojans!  
I was on both sides during the war, and yet upon  
neither,  
Standing aloof from each, yet standing with one  
and the other,  
With father Priam of Troy as well as with Greek  
Agamemnon —  
Tossed to this part or that, and torn into shreds  
by the Furies;  
Greeks had my brain on their side, the Trojans  
had hold of my heart-strings;  
With that breach in my soul, how could I make  
any music?  
I cannot stand the stress, the horrible stress of  
the struggle  
Always renewed in my song whose every word is  
a blood-stain.  
But hereafter the man will arise who is able to  
sing it,  
Healing the wound in himself and the time,  
which in me is unhealing;  
One shall come and sing of that mightiest deed  
of the Argives,

He shall arise, the poet of Hellas — the man hath  
arisen  
Who will take it and mould it and make it the  
song of the ages.  
Youth, be thou singer of Troy and the war for  
the beautiful Helen,  
Sing of the Hero in wrath, and reconciled sing  
of the Hero!’

Thus spoke Ariston the bard; what a life he  
started within me!  
Chaos I was, but the sun of a song had smitten  
the darkness,  
And my soul bore a universe, with one word as a  
midwife,  
That was the word of the poet, who spoke as  
the maker primeval,  
Calling the sun and the earth from the void, and  
the firmament starry.  
Always welfare he brought to the people who  
hearkened his wisdom,  
And he was ever alive with the thought of bring-  
ing a blessing,  
Climbing the height of the highest Gods, where  
dwells freedom from envy.  
After deep silence, the mother of good, he sol-  
emnly added:

‘Now is the moment to seek the divinity’s  
sign for thy calling,

Godlike the token must be, for of Gods is the  
breath of the singer ;  
Go to the grot of the sweet-voiced Muses down  
by the sea-side  
Where old Nereus scooped out of stone his son-  
orous cavern,  
Sounding the strains of a lyre that is played by  
the hands of great waters,  
As they incessantly strike on the sands and the  
shells and the rock walls,  
Reaching out from the heart of the sea for a  
stroke of their fingers,  
Just for one stroke of their billowy fingers, then  
broken forever,  
Playing the notes of a song that can only be  
heard by a poet.  
There thou wilt hear, if it also be thine, the voice  
of the Muses,  
Who will give thee their golden word and the  
high consecration ;  
But if it be not within thee already, they will be  
silent,  
Silence is the command of the God to seek them  
no further ;  
Then thou wilt hear in their house by the sea but  
a roar and a rumble,  
But a roar and a rumble of godless waters in  
discord ;  
Wheel about in thy tracks, perchance thou wilt  
make a good cobbler.'

Not yet cold was the word when I started and  
came to the cavern,  
Set with many a glistening gem overhead in the  
ceiling,  
Decked with sculpture of stone cut out on its  
sides by the Naiads,  
Making a gallery fair of the forms of the Gods  
of the waters,  
Round whose feet mid the tangle and fern were  
playing the mermaids,  
Smiting the wine-dark deep, as they dived from  
the sight of the sea-boys,  
Smiting the blue-lit billows above into millions  
of sparkles,  
Into millions of cressets that lit up the cavern  
like starlight,  
Secret cavern of love for the nymphs, the watery  
dwellers,  
Echoing music afar of the kiss of the earth and  
the ocean.  
Well I knew the recess for often before I had  
been there,  
Oft I had heard the report that told of the sil-  
very swimmers,  
Told of the maidens and youths who loved far  
under the billows,  
Loved one another far under the billows and sang  
the sweet love song,  
Swimming around in the grotts and the groves of  
deep Amphitrite,

Or reclining to rest on the couch of the pearl or  
the coral.

There I had seen in the sunset the car of hoary  
Poseidon,  
Skimming across the wave with his train to his  
watery temple  
Over the golden bridge of the sunbeams that lay  
on the ripples,  
Bridge that lay on the ripples ablaze in the sheen  
of Apollo,  
Spanning the stretch of the sea from Chios away  
to the sundown.

There I had seen old Proteus, changeful God of  
the waters,  
Forming, transforming himself, the one, into  
shapes of all being, -  
Into the leaf-shaking tree and into the shaggy-  
maned lion,  
Creeping reptile, blazing fire, and flowing water;  
Still I saw him, the one and the same, under-  
neath all his changes.

There I had seen the beautiful Nereid, daugh-  
ter of Nereus,  
Chased by the sinuous Triton, the man of the sea  
in his passion,  
Who would snort in his fury whenever the mer-  
maid escaped him,  
Spouting the foam of his rage up into the face  
of the heavens,

Rising and shaking his billowy curls and blowing  
his sea-horn.

There I lay down on a pallet of stone and slid  
into slumber,  
While I was sleeping, stood up before me a troop  
of fair women,  
Nine of them, sisters who sang in a circle, they  
were the Muses,  
Singing along with their mother, Mnemosyne,  
who was the tenth one,  
Who would always give them the hint of the  
matter and music,  
Looking backward she gave to the Muses the  
beat of the present.  
Soon they arose into beautiful shapes from the  
strains of the cavern,  
Quite as once I had seen them arise in the  
smithy of Chalcon,  
Taking divinity's form in the strokes of his  
dexterous hammer.  
One of them stepped from the group, alto-  
gether the tallest and fairest,  
And she kissed me; it was Calliope who in the  
cavern  
Gave me again the sweet kiss that I felt in  
the smoke of the smithy;  
But her lips began moving with words in the  
twilight of dreamland,



And with a smile she stretched out her hand and  
spake me her message:

‘ Hail, O son of Cretheis, doubly the son of thy  
mother,

Son of her mythical soul and son of her beautiful  
body,

Hearken, dear youth, to our call, for thou hast  
been chosen the master,

Thee we endow with all of our gifts of speech  
and of spirit,

But take heed of the warning, henceforth be ready  
to suffer ;

Mark it ! along with each gift the Gods have a  
penalty given,

For each good that they grant unto mortals,  
strict is the payment ;

Not without toil is the gift of the Muses, not  
without sorrow ;

Nay, a Fury is thine, called Sympathy, rending  
thy bosom,

Making the fate of the human thine own in the  
song which thou singest ;

Into the stroke of thy heart we have put each  
pang of the mortal,

Which will throb and respond in a strain to the  
cry of the victim ;

Answer thou must in agony every twinge of his  
torture,

Pass through his sorrow of soul, and leap with  
the sting of his body ;

And when he goes down to death, thou living  
must go along with him,  
Go to the uttermost region beyond the line of  
the sunset,  
Living descend to the dead and speak in the  
Houses of Hades.

Now thou must wander; thy path runs over  
each mountain of Hellas,  
Over the river and plain to the site of each ham-  
let and city,  
That thou see all its people and hear them tell  
their own story;  
Not till then art thou fitted to sing the great song  
of Achæa.

First to Troy thou must pass and look at the  
plain and the ruins,  
Thou wilt hear on the air the fierce clangor of  
arms in the onset,  
Hear the groans of the wounded, the shouts of  
the victor and vanquished,  
Hear the voice of the graves by the shore of the  
blue Hellespontus.

Still the ghosts of the dead are fighting, will fight  
there forever!

Catch the fleet flight of their words in thy strain,  
in its adamant fix them,

Make adamantine the speech of the spectres by  
rolling Scamander.

Also the Gods thou must see descending from  
lofty Olympus,

Aiding one side or the other, inspiring this hero  
or that one,  
Nay, they must fight on Olympus, the Gods  
must have too a battle,  
But forget not omnipotence — high above all of  
them Zeus sits.  
'Tis our vision we grant thee, to spy out their  
forms in the ether,  
As they flit hither a thought of the mortal, but  
yet a God too !'

Loftily spoke the grand Muse, when she  
changed to a look of compassion,  
Which made me weep for myself as again she  
began to forecast me :  
' O, the hard law which for good the divine must  
lay on the human !  
For thy vision celestial the penalty too must be  
given,  
In return for the boon thou must yield thy ter-  
restrial vision,  
Sight at last in old age will be weighed and be  
paid for thy insight.  
Poverty thou must endure on the way for the  
cause of thy poem,  
Thine is to hunger in body and thine to suffer in  
spirit,  
Still kind hands will reach thee a morsel where-  
ever thou singest,

Kindred souls will speak thee a word of sweet  
    recognition,  
Then go further and sing, though at first nobody  
    may listen,  
Further and further and sing till the end has been  
    sung of thy journey.  
Hard is thy lot, I warn thee — the lot of the  
    God-gifted singer,  
But it cannot be shunned — to shun it were  
    death without dying.  
Go now, get thee ready at once, and set out on  
    thy travels.'

Roused by the voice of command I awoke in a  
    swirl of the senses,  
Homeward I hastened, reflecting how I might  
    break to my mother  
What I had heard in a swoon from the Muses  
    so fateful, foretelling  
Sad departure, ordaining divinely the long sep-  
    aration.  
Great was her joy at the marvelous tale, and  
    great was her sorrow,  
Tear was fighting with tear in a war of delight  
    and of anguish,  
Till in the masterful might of her heart she rose  
    up and bade me:  
'Go my son, start to-day, thou must follow the  
    call of the Muses,

Suffer whatever of weal and of woe the Goddesses  
give thee;  
Thou wast the hope of my life, but gladly I shall  
thee surrender,  
Follow the call of the Muses, I can still spin for  
a living.' ”

III.

Enterpe.

*The Daughter of Homer.*

## ARGUMENT.

*While Homer is telling to the youths the story of his early life, his daughter Prazilla, who has hitherto been kept in the background, appears and begs that she be allowed to share in the school and in the gifts of her father. She refuses all the allurements of love till this right be accorded her. Homer grants her petition, and finds in her words a strong note plainly indicating the future. Then they all move to the shrine of Apollo, and the poet prays the God for light within, and also prays for the God, who is still to unfold.*

Strong and firm yet tender in tone had spoken  
Homerus,  
Ever the son of his mother and born each day of  
her spirit,  
Merely the thought of her brought back the sight  
to his eyes, though he saw not,  
And to his vision, though shut to the world, her  
shape had arisen,  
Speaking the long and the last farewell as he left  
her to travel,  
Speaking the words which Memory, shyest of  
Muses, had whispered.

Of a sudden he stopped, borne off by the tide  
of his feelings,  
Out of the region of speech, which died like a  
beautiful music



Far on the hills, with echoes repeating them-  
selves on his heart-strings,  
As he hearkened that voice which can only be  
heard in its silence.  
Always the poet responds to the lightest touch of  
his poem,  
In it the music he hears, and also the music be-  
yond it,  
For two strains his measures must have, both  
singing together,  
One of mortals and earth, the other of Gods and  
Olympus,  
One of gloom and of fate, the other of light and  
of freedom.  
Priest though he be at the altar of song, he is also  
the victim,  
And he yields up his heart to the battle of joy  
and of sorrow.

Homer, sovereign singer, was weaving the  
strands of his story,  
Weaving together the threads of his life as he sat  
in his garden,  
Where, on the path of the sea to the East, the is-  
land of Chios  
Up from the waters throbs to the rise and the  
fall of the billows,  
Being itself but a petrified fragment of sea-  
born music,

Which was sung into stone with its notes at their  
sweetest vibration.  
Over the slant and the summit the fruitage is hav-  
ing a frolic,  
Oranges coated with gold and olives sparkling in  
silver,  
Playing in floods of the sun that pour from the  
sky to the island,  
Whose new ardent blood is flowing to juice of the  
wine-press.  
Heart-beats of stormiest stone you can feel every-  
where to the hill-tops,  
Heaving the vehement earth till it rises from  
slope into summit,  
While the fiery soil is transmuted to grapes in  
the vineyard,  
Which reveal the red rage of the God in the  
sparks of their droplets.  
Pulses of passionate air you can breathe every-  
where in the island,  
Lifting the rapturous soul into love of the youth  
and the maiden,  
Which breaks forth into strains in answer to  
valley and mountain.  
Every look is a chorus of sea and of earth and  
of heaven,  
All of the isle is a song as it sways in the sweep  
of its ridges,  
And keeps time to the up and the down of the  
beat of a master,

Tuning the sea and the land to vast undulations  
of music,  
Notes of the strain that rose from the voice of  
the singer primeval  
When he created the land and the sea and the  
firmament starry.

In the heart of this musical isle, his birth-place,  
sat Homer,  
And around him stood youths from the east and  
the west of all Hellas,  
In a trance of the Muses carried along by his  
numbers,  
Yielding their souls unto his to be shaped to  
that harmony splendid.  
Nor from that group of fair youths could Eros  
be rightfully absent,  
Eros, the God of Love, had his shrine, as his  
wont is, in secret  
There in the garden of Homer who, though shut  
in his eye-sight,  
Could behold each deity present, however dis-  
guised.

Suddenly all of the eyes of the youths were  
turned from the singer,  
And to the tune of new measures were shooting  
poetic scintillas,  
Rolling sidelong in fiery joy, yet trying to hide  
it,

Flinging millions of sparkles over the form of a  
maiden,  
Very beautiful maiden, who entered the gate of  
the garden.  
Out of her hiding she moved, emerging from  
leaves of her arbor,  
Like a Goddess she came, who has sped from the  
heights of Olympus  
Down to the longing earth, to appear the divine  
unto mortals.  
Forward she stepped to the group without stop-  
ping, and came to its center ;  
All of the youths were lighting her path with  
their looks as she passed them,  
Making the twinkle of starlight there in the  
blaze of the sunlight.  
With a reverent glance she touched the lean hand  
of the poet, .  
Yet the look of resolve gave strength to her  
face in its sweetness,  
Softly obedience shone just while her own way  
she was going.  
Standing behind him she pressed the bloom of  
her cheek to his forehead,  
Roses of life seemed to suddenly shoot from the  
furrows of wisdom,  
And to her father thus spake Praxilla the daugh-  
ter of Homer,  
While her strong sweet lips gave a kiss which  
sounded heroic :

“ Father, suffer me also to come to thy knees  
and to listen;  
I would learn who thou art before thou pass from  
this sunshine,  
Soon thou must go, methinks, with the Days, the  
daughters of Phœbus,  
Go with the beautiful Days far over the sea to  
the sundown.  
I am the daughter of Homer, hardly I know yet  
my father;  
Do not deny me the hope of my soul which of  
thine is begotten.  
Great is my longing to hear of what thou art  
saying and singing;  
Why should men not share with the women their  
lore and their wisdom?  
None the less will you have, and we shall gain  
much by your bounty;  
We shall be worthy of you, and you will receive  
the full blessing.  
Long I have patiently kept in my bower, my  
beautiful bower,  
Covered with blossom and branch and filled with  
the fragrance of Nature,  
Which thou nobly gavest me once — it seems long  
ago now —  
Thoughtful the gift was and kind, but to-day I  
can stay there no longer.  
As I listened within it, hidden in leaves and in  
branches,

Wreathed around and around in its flowers and  
clasped in its tendrils,  
I resolved to go forth and to claim my heritage  
also,  
Heritage equal of legend and song which are all  
thy possessions.  
Hear me, O Father! thy child, I am come to  
know of thy knowledge,  
I am come to thy school to learn if I be the true  
heiress,  
And to say the one word which long has been  
growing within me,  
Not yet mature, but this day it is ripe and must  
drop from my lips now:  
Child of thy body I am, I seek to be child of thy  
spirit,  
I, not knowing my father, am not the true  
daughter of Homer."

Mild was the mien, yet strong was the word  
which the maiden had uttered,  
Gentle the note of her voice, suppressing softly  
a quiver,  
Yet betraying a wavering line in response to her  
heart-beats,  
Which sank down with her modesty, yet swelled  
up with her purpose,  
Heedful of men in her presence, but of their  
scoffing defiant,

To her father dutiful, yet her own way she must  
go too.

All of the youths admired and looked, she re-  
turned not their glances,  
Was there not one whom she in her heart already  
had chosen —

One of those beautiful youths, the flower of  
Hellas and Asia?

See how handsome they stand in a group, as if  
they were God-born,

Gathered now on Olympus, rejoicing their par-  
ents immortal!

Still not a look from the maiden that way! not  
a glance of sly favor!

How can she help it? But not a beam hath she  
dropped there among them.

Say, has Nature lost her authority over the  
maiden?

Once revenges were wreaked on the rebel, double  
revenges,

Love which rejects will feel too the pang of being  
rejected,

Twofold the wound which Eros inflicts if you tear  
out his arrow.

Mark how the generous summers of Chios have  
given their bounty,

Given their hidden command in the warmth of a  
Southern climate,

But the command is not heard, is defied by the  
daughter of Homer.

Subtle and sinuous are the retreats in the heart  
of a maiden  
Where she hides herself, unconsciously testing  
the gold there;  
Labyrinth hopeless it is to dozens of fairest of  
suitors,  
Yet its clew is simple — merely the love of the  
right one,  
When he happens along, as he certainly will, on  
her pathway;  
Yes, he will come, though we cannot tell when —  
to-day or to-morrow;  
Thinking or thoughtless, guilty or guileless, lo!  
he is chosen,  
And the rest, much better perchance, march off  
under judgment;  
Just he, nobody else, and the reason without  
any reason,  
Sent from above he must be, it is said, yet sent  
by himself too,  
Helped divinely she is, in going the way that she  
pleases,  
Providence brings them together, and both have  
done what they wanted.  
See the two Gods, within and without! they have  
met and are kissing,  
Eros and Psyche have met and are kissing, the  
spirits immortal,  
Long before the two mortals have tasted the lips  
of each other.



But not so it runs now in the tale of the  
daughter of Homer,  
Now the law seems changed — and yet we can  
hardly believe it;  
Strange desire she has to share in the lore and  
the legend,  
Firmly refusing to listen to-day to the whisper  
of Eros,  
Who is wont to be hinting to maidens his secret  
suggestion,  
And to speak with his face hid in clouds till he  
dare be discovered.  
Now she will take her part of the gifts from her  
father descended,  
Dimly dreaming perchance that she hereafter  
may need them;  
She will learn the old songs which treasure the  
wisdom of peoples,  
Learn the story of heroes tried in the failure  
and triumph,  
Learn the story of women, unfallen, fallen, for-  
given,  
Faithful Penelope, dire Clytemnestra, beautiful  
Helen;  
She too will sing, remaining forever the daughter  
of Homer.

Gently the poet groped for her hand, reaching  
out with his fingers,

Found it and laid it in his with a satisfied look,  
then addressed her :  
“ Daughter methinks thy voice has suddenly  
changed from thy childhood,  
Yesterday thou wert a girl, to-day thou art wholly  
the woman,  
I can hear in thy tones once more the voice of  
my mother,  
Thine is the voice of Cretheis, when she was tell-  
ing a story,  
Sweet are the turns of thy tongue in talking our  
living Hellenic,  
And yet seeming to speak just to me from a world  
resurrected,  
Building anew out of speech the rainbows of  
youthful remembrance.  
But a difference, too, I can hear—thy words  
are the stronger,  
Yes, far stronger are thine than the words of  
Cretheis my mother,  
Who could fable the past and loved antiquity’s  
custom ;  
Stronger I deem them than Helen’s, which held  
in their spell all Achæa.  
They do not dwell in old days, nor do they de-  
lay in the present,  
They belong not here in our Chios, belong not  
in Hellas,  
But reach out to a time and a land somewhere in  
the distance,

Dreamily rising this moment, I see, out the fog  
of the future,  
Faintly lifted to life in the light of the beams of  
Apollo,  
Who has whirled in his chariot over the arch of  
our heavens,  
And, now facing the West, is scanning the far-  
thermost Ocean.  
List ! I bid thee to come when done is the duty  
of household,  
Come when thou wilt and stay when thou canst,  
both now and hereafter,  
Freely unfold what is in thee to all that ever  
thou canst be.  
Travel thou must thine own way of life as thy  
father before thee,  
Be thou child of my spirit, be thou heiress of  
Homer,  
Follow the path of the Sun round the world, and  
that be thy journey."

Scarce had he uttered the word, when stately  
he rose from the settle,  
Full of the thought he had spoken he shone in  
each line of his visage ;  
Then he moved to the place where stood in his  
garden an altar,  
For, though blind, he knew well the way to the  
shrine of the Light-God.

After him moved the daughter and youths in  
holy procession,  
Solemn, slow-stepping, while stainlessly white  
fell the folds of their garments;  
When they had gathered about him and stood in  
a worshipful silence,  
Hopeful he turned to the sky, rolled upward his  
sightless eyeballs,  
Seeking the face of the God that shone as the  
sun in the heavens,  
And he prayed his soul's prayer, with might of  
an instant fulfillment:  
"O Apollo, bearer of all that is good to us  
mortals,  
Bearer of light to the Earth and of sight to the  
soul in thy presence,  
God of the luminous look that darts to the past  
and the future,  
And doth shine on the present forever, creating  
it daily!  
Shed still over the Earth thy light, though to me  
thou deny it;  
Build thy arch of pure beams each day round the  
heavens above us,  
Spend thy blessing on others, though I be not  
able to take it;  
Hold overhead as our lamp and our shield thy  
canopy golden,  
And, as thou risest upon the beautiful world out-  
side me,

Rise and illumine the world, the dim world that  
    is lying within me!  
Deity though thou be, for thee also I lift up my  
    prayer ;  
Thou unfold in thyself while I too in thee am  
    unfolding,  
More and more may thy light be transformed  
    from the outer to inner,  
Till thou be risen from godship of nature to god-  
    ship of spirit.  
Then through thee may the song that I sing be  
    reborn in the ages,  
Ever reborn unto men in the sheen of thy spirit,  
    O Light-God! ”

All the youths prayed the prayer of Homer,  
    the daughter prayed with them,  
In low tones of devotion that speak to the deity  
    present,  
Standing full in the sheen of the sun by the shrine  
    of Apollo,  
Who from his way in the West, threw back his  
    glances propitious,  
Warming the words of the poet, and making the  
    moments all golden.

IV.

Erato.

*The Stranger of Northland.*

## ARGUMENT.

*At this point a stranger appears in the school of Homer, not a Greek or Asiatic, but a Barbarian, so called, from the far northwest. He has come to learn something about Homer, having had some previous information from a Greek captive whom he had taken in war. The stranger wishes to carry Homer's poetry — the whole of it, and not some fragments — to his people, and hand it down to the future. Meantime Praxilla, the daughter of Homer, listens to the story of the stranger with an interest never felt before, and she neglects for a moment her household duties in her eagerness to see and hear him. Homer and the scholars, after trying in vain to pronounce the rough gutturals of his name, salute him by the Greek title of Hesperion.*

Scarce to the God of the Light had they ended  
their powerful prayer,  
And looked up from their service divine with a  
sense of their freedom,  
Lo, a stranger arrives, a youth still dusted with  
travel,  
Yet with a glow of new gladness that told of a  
journey completed.  
“Look, who is that?” the scholars were whis-  
pering each to the other,  
“Homerid novel he is, just come from Barbary  
distant;  
Wonder if he have a tongue in his mouth that  
can trill the Greek accent,  
See but his mantle of motley and garments  
swaddled around him,



Look at his face and his form, he never was  
born in our Hellas.  
Beautiful still he might be, if he only were  
dressed in our drapery."

Then they ceased, for the stranger already was  
standing among them,  
Manly in look and lofty in stature and earnest in  
feature.  
Fair was his hair and ruddy his cheek and broad  
were his shoulders,  
Swift was the flash of his eye, it was wild and  
still it was gentle,  
Often it sank to a dream reflecting the blue of  
the heavens.  
Some new sort of a man he appeared to the  
Greek of the islands,  
Taller he stood by the half of his head than any  
one present ;  
At the entrance he stopped and gazed at the  
group for a moment,  
Smit by the sight of what he had suddenly seen  
in an eye-shot ;  
Then he turned and spoke to the poet, slowly  
pronouncing  
Each Greek word in a tone that tingled the ear  
with new music,  
Though it tickled at first the light-brained youths  
to a titter,  
Whispering, jibing, making remarks in the ban-  
ter of boyhood.

Thus spake the stranger, deliberate, yet intoning his firmness,  
For a message he had in his heart, and was going to tell it :  
“ Far in the region of snow I dwell, whence Boreas chilling  
Falls on the sun-loved South with his sword that is forged in the Northland,  
Forged out of ice and tempered in blasts from the nostrils of frost-gods.  
Fierce is that warrior of winds and like the barbarian ever,  
Who is charmed from his frozen world to the warmth and the harvest,  
And descends to your seas with his hordes in a whirl and a tempest,  
Mad with your love he smites in his rage and seizes your beauty.  
But, Oh Homer, you I address, the goal of my travels —  
For I deem you that man whom I name by the awe of your forehead —  
Do you know your measures have pierced our ice builded fortress,  
Warming our clime by their breath and melting our hearts to their music?  
Rude is the turn of your words in our speech, and dim is the meaning,  
Still it touches our hearts, and to sympathy softens our fierceness ;

You have made us all feel ourselves a little more  
human,  
When your Hero in wrath relented in pity for  
Priam,  
Ransomed his bitterest foe and comforted sweetly  
the father.  
Northland is starting to thaw in the breath of  
the Southern singer,  
And I am come to reward you alive by telling  
the message."

Joyful the poet was tuned by the tidings hyper-  
boréan,  
Voice from a far off world and promise of much  
that was coming,  
Casting across the Greek landscape a shadow of  
lands in the sunset.  
New were the tones of the tongue, not Doric,  
Aeolic, Ionic,  
Not the turn of the speech that is spoken on  
island or mainland,  
Nothing like it had ever been heard in the city of  
Chios,  
Nothing like it had ever been sung in the strains  
of a rhapsode,  
Music it had of its own, and yet all the words  
were Hellenic,  
Nay, all the words were Homer's, and seemed to  
be drawn from his poems,

Wondrously tinged with new tints and quaintly  
turned to new meanings.

Greatly surprised at the sound of the voice spake  
Homer, uprising :

“Speak, oh guest, tell how you have learned  
our language of Hellas ;

Hard it is for the native, harder it must be for  
strangers,

Cunning it is like ourselves, eluding the grasp of  
the learner,

In its hundreds of shifts transforming itself like  
old Proteus.

Then I notice your rhythm to be of my measures  
begotten,

And some turns of your speech are certainly born  
of my spirit,

Aye and the sweep of the thought when you  
spoke of the Hero Achilles.

Well you have heard my song, far better than  
many a Grecian,

Though a barbarian, you, I can feel, have the  
touch of my kinship.

Mighty and marvelous is all this, I would never  
have thought it,

Come now, tell me the story, Oh guest, for great  
is my wonder.”

“That I shall tell you at once,” he replied,  
“not long is the story.

What I have spoken to you, I learned from a  
Greek, my own captive,  
Whom I had taken in war, when he came to my  
country's border,  
Trading, plundering, wandering over the world  
for adventure;  
That was another Ulysses, much-enduring and  
crafty,  
Loving the song and the fable, singing them too  
on occasion,  
Loving the deed and daringly doing on land and  
on water.  
Your Greek earth was too small for the stress of  
his thought and his action,  
Over the border he broke and hunted his prey  
like a lion,  
Knowledge beyond it he sought, and fell into fate  
in his searching.  
How I felt in my bosom the swell and the stroke  
of his spirit!  
When I found what he was, I made him my friend  
and companion,  
Though a slave still in name, he was given my  
love and my bounty;  
Well he repaid the act; from a prisoner's death  
I had saved him,  
And he saved me in turn from the ignorant death  
of the savage.  
There in the forest your speech I began, I prac-  
ticed it daily

Till by his aid I was able to speak it the way you  
now hear me.  
Him I set free as soon as he taught me the lan-  
guage of Homer,  
It is the word of your poem that broke the chain  
of his bondage,  
Mine too it broke at a blow when I said in your  
Greek: 'Be free now,'  
And I am sure, it would break every chain of the  
people who spoke it."

More astonished than ever the poet burst out  
into questions:  
"Why hast thou come to this spot, and how  
didst thou get to our island?  
Utter again to me here thy broken Hellenic —  
I love it,  
Love it twisted and splintered and broken to ra-  
diant fragments  
Dropping out of thy mouth, yet speaking the  
best that is spoken.  
Say, who art thou, man, and what art thou doing  
in Hellas?"

Jubilant Homer asked, but could not wait for  
the answer,  
Asked once more, and that was not yet the end  
of his asking,  
Till the stranger, breaking the lull of a moment,  
responded:

“ He the Greek whom I spoke of, once called  
you a native of Chios;  
With that name in my heart, inquiring each step  
I am come now  
Over the land from afar and over the sea in a  
vessel.

But is it so? I can hardly believe it myself —  
Art thou Homer?  
Tell me, old man, thy name, O speak it but  
once — Is it Homer? ”

“ So I was called by my mother, still so I am  
called by the Hellenes,  
Though there be some who deem me not Homer  
but some other person,  
Merely a different man of that name,” responded  
Homerus,  
And a sunrise of smiles broke over the seams of  
his features,  
As arose in his thought the pedagogue dwelling  
in Chios,  
Terrible pedagogue, trouncer of boys, the crusty  
Typtódes.

Then spake the stranger, uplifting himself to  
the height of his stature,  
Far overlooking the heads of the rest of the little  
assembly:  
“ Let me now tell you the scope of my travel,  
the hope of my journey !

Praised be the Gods! I have reached in safety  
the place of your dwelling,  
Mighty, resistless the need I have felt to see you  
and hear you,  
Aye, to learn your full song and store it away in  
my bosom,  
Whence the Muses, daughters of Memory, al-  
ways can fetch it.  
I would carry it off to my home far up in the  
Northland,  
Fleeting over the wintery border of beautiful  
Hellas  
Where it reaches beyond the abode of the Gods  
on Olympus,  
To the regions where drinking their whey dwell  
the mare-milking Thracians,  
Over the hills and the valleys away to the banks  
of a river,  
To the stream that is bearing the flood of the  
wide-whirling Istros,  
Still beyond and beyond, still over the plain and  
the mountain,  
Over vast lands to the seas, and over the seas to  
the lands still,  
Through the iced forest, and through the  
tracts of the frost-fields,  
Still beyond and beyond, still over the earth and  
its circles,  
I would carry your song in my soul to the homes  
of my people



Where the huge arms of the breakers are smiting  
the shore of the Ocean,  
Ever beyond and beyond in the stretch of their  
strokes they are striking,  
Beating, forever repeating the strokes of the infinite  
Ocean."

Both of his arms he outstretched and gazed on  
the sea for a moment;  
Catching his breath, the stranger returned from  
his look to his hearers:  
"Barbarous lands and peoples you call them, and  
truly so call them,  
But in their hearts they are ready, I know, to be  
tuned to your music,  
And to be dipped, once more new-born, in your  
harmony holy,  
Which they will keep forever enshrined in their  
lore and their legend.  
Homer, O Homer, poet of all the nations and  
ages,  
Give unto Barbary now what the Gods have  
given to Hellas."

Round whirled the stranger, the beat of his  
thought still smiting within him,  
Driven out of himself, he walked at a whisk a  
small circle  
And came back to his stand, as if putting a bodily  
period

There to the sweep of his utterance swift, but  
his spirit's full gallop  
He could not rein in at once, and so his words he  
continued :

“ All of your song I would know, the whole  
of it fitted together,  
That Greek captive of mine could only sing me  
the fragments,  
Broken off here and there from the whole —  
most beautiful fragments,  
Which Mnemosyne fleetingly brought him when  
he invoked her.  
But the whole of your song I must have, the  
whole of it shredless,  
For the whole is often far more than all of its  
pieces,  
Aye, the whole is all of its pieces, and is the  
whole too.”

Here laughed Homer aloud, yet spake no word  
with his pleasure ;  
What had started the poet who rarely gave way  
to his laughter?  
It was the thought, the comical thought of the  
pedagogue Chian,  
Who was always beating and breaking the song  
into pieces,  
Till he became what he made, became too himself  
but a fragment —

Terrible fragment of man, the trouncer of boys  
and of verses,  
Terrible pedagogue Chian, the slasher and  
thrasher, Typtodes.

All of the youths drew closer around him, the  
wonderful stranger,  
Scholar hyperboréan, the first that had come from  
the Northland ;  
They received him as one of themselves in the  
school of the master,  
Gone is the scoff and the jibe, and the whisper is  
speaking respectful.

Also Praxilla was there, the beautiful daughter  
of Homer,  
Hearing the marvelous tale and pondering deeply  
its meaning.  
Sweetly the maiden looked up and smiled at the  
mirth of her father,  
Though she knew not the cause, she knew that  
the stranger had pleased him,  
Her too the stranger had pleased, she thought,  
in pleasing the father,  
Her too the stranger had pleased — she knew not  
what was the reason.  
Not yet brought to an end was the task of the  
day in the household,  
Still she lingered and listened, though hearing the  
call of the kitchen.

Nobly erect stands the youth, and towers aloft  
in his stature,  
Brave as a hero he must be to travel alone the  
long journey,  
Loyal the heart in his breast, so true to his Greek  
benefactor ;  
Lofty his soul looks out and full of divine aspi-  
ration !  
Man with a beard, overtopping the cluster of  
beardless bardlings,  
As great Zeus overtops all the Gods in his mien  
and his power.  
Burst is the bloom of his manhood, still as a man  
he is youthful,  
Weighty his speech drops down with the ring of  
the masterful doer ;  
And Praxilla the daughter of Homer still lingered  
and listened,  
Lingered to hear but a word, one more word  
she would catch from the stranger,  
Though again she heard the importunate cry of  
the kitchen.

Seeing her there he began once more, that son  
of the Northland,  
For he thought she might wish to be told what he  
knew about women :  
“ Rude though we be and warriors from birth, we  
are fond of the household,

And we honor the wife who rules with her heart  
in her home life;  
But, yet more, we honor the woman, for she is  
the healer,  
Ever the merciful healer through the love in her  
nature,  
Healing the soul and the body, and nursing the  
sick and the helpless.  
Aye, yet more, we hold her the seeress, the  
gifted divinely,  
Who has the vision beyond, foretelling the time  
unto mortals."

And Praxilla still lingered and listened, the  
daughter of Homer,  
Lingered to hear but a word, one more word she  
would hear from the stranger ;  
Louder and louder resounded the dolorous cry  
of the kitchen.

Then the poet in speech forethoughtful and  
hearty addressed him :  
" Welcome, oh stranger, here is our board with  
its wine and its viands,  
Stay and partake, be refreshed from thy journey  
in body and spirit,  
First pour a drop to the God of the Light, far  
darter Apollo,  
Pray then, for men have need of the God, he will  
answer thy prayer.

Take of me all that I am, or was or ever I shall  
be,  
Bear me afar as thou wilt, to thy folk in the  
snows of the Northland,  
Learn all my song and carry it off, the whole,  
not a fragment,  
For no fragment can live if torn from its life in  
the body;  
Sing it thyself and let it be sung by the farther-  
most peoples,  
Thine it is as it is mine, if thou only art able to  
sing it;  
In thy words I can feel that thou art the son of  
the future,  
Feel what is coming to me and to mine from the  
world to the westward.  
Welcome O guest, now drink of our wine and  
eat of our viands;  
Stay — perchance I shall make thee joint heir of  
all my possessions.”

So spake the father in joy, expecting the feast  
to be ready.  
But Praxilla, where is Praxilla, the dutiful  
maiden?  
Still she lingered in spite of herself, and listened,  
and wondered,  
Lingered to catch but a word, one more word,  
from the lips of the stranger,

Though her father she heard re-echo the cry of  
kitchen,  
When he spoke of drinking the wine and eating  
the viands.  
Beautiful daughter of Homer she stood there,  
but dutiful also;  
She was restless, and said to herself in reproof,  
still delaying:  
“ Surely I ought to be off, I was needed long  
since in my kitchen;  
What will the household become if left to itself  
in the future?  
Oh, those women, those wonderful women, up  
there in the Northland!  
That was the tale of a dream, and still I appear  
to be dreaming,  
Thinking myself far away in the glistening home  
of the frost-gods,  
Thinking myself in a temple of ice on the top of  
an iceberg.  
Woman, now speed from this old Greek world  
and march to the new one!  
Would he take me along if I perchance would go  
with him?  
That is my mind — and yet I know not whether I  
know it;  
That is my mind — beyond the seas and over the  
mountains —  
But I must go — my kitchen, my kitchen — and  
still I delay here —

Ever beyond and beyond is my mind, on the wings  
of my thinking,  
Over the plain and the mountain, and over the  
border of Hellas,  
Up to the stream that is bearing the flood of the  
wide-whirling Istros,  
Over the river afar to the shore of the further-  
most Ocean,  
Where I can feel the embrace of the waves of the  
earth-holding Ocean,  
There I would stand by the waters — and yet  
even they could not stop me !  
But away to my kitchen, my kitchen — Oh, why  
do I stay here ! ”

Just at that moment the stranger looked over  
the youths round about him,  
But those youths did not mark quite what he was  
warily seeking,  
Even away from the poet he looked and found  
what he searched for,  
Where stood the lingering, listening daughter of  
Homer, Praxilla,  
Who still delayed for a word, one more word  
from the lips of the stranger.

Then spake the father, breaking into the  
thought of the daughter :  
“ Hold ! thy name, O guest, we must know, ere  
we go to the banquet,



We must address thee as one of our own, when  
we sit at the table."

Slowly the stranger pronounced it, barbarous,  
heavy, rough-throated,  
But those soft-toned Greeks could not speak it in  
spite of their cunning,  
Oft he repeated it for them, but in vain they  
essayed it,  
Rudely its sounds were jolting out their mouths  
in confusion,  
Broken to fragments around on the air flew the  
name of the stranger.  
Then the master spake out, and bade all be silent  
a moment :

" Much too old is my voice to be forced to the  
tones of thy language,  
Always it creaks and breaks if strained to the  
subtle adjustment,  
I have sung too much to make any longer this  
discord.  
Hearken to me ! in my tongue I shall name thee  
henceforward Hesperion,  
Son of the Evening, come from the dip of bright  
Helius westward,  
Rising and shining when it is sunset already in  
Hellas.  
That is a name we can sing to right music in  
measure Hellenic,

List to the word, let us sing it together: Welcome, Hesperion!"

Then the youths sang aloud all together: Welcome, Hesperion!

And Praxilla whispered in silence: Thrice welcome Hesperion!

In a blush at her whisper, she turned and ran out to her kitchen.



**Clis.**

*The Travels of Homer.*

**(85)**

## ARGUMENT.

*Homer takes up the account of his travels through Hellas in preparation for his work. All his scholars are present, of whom a short list is given. He first went to Troy, and saw the ruined city with its plain, where the war took place. Then he crossed over to the continent of Greece, and heard the people of each village celebrate the deeds of its special hero. While singing himself he also heard the bards of every locality sing its special legend of Troy and the aforetime. Thus Homer gathered all the stories of the Trojan war, and fused them together into his great national poem. He chances to speak of Helen and her captivity; at once the old conflict flames out among the pupils in his school. But Homer stops the dispute for a short time, and continues the narrative of his travels, till the strife breaks out anew, this time over Hector, between Glaucus the Lycian and Demodocus the Ithacan. Each side is still ready to fight the Trojan war over again. Homer once more harmonizes the conflict, and takes occasion to show how the poet must embrace in himself both sides of the struggle which he portrays.*

Morning had come from the East saluting the  
island of Chios,  
Throwing her kisses of light along every line of  
the landscape,  
Till it stood forth in her glance, revealed and  
transfigured to vision.  
Soft was the light that she dropped from her lips  
on the hill and the valley,  
Tenderly touching the air with violet tinges and  
golden ;  
Under her feet lay the waters and over her head  
bent the heavens,  
Both of them waked from the night, reflecting  
her soul in their stillness;  
Sea and sky, the two big blue eyes of nature, had  
opened,

And were looking with joy on Chios; the beautiful island,  
Where not far from the beach stood the garden  
and dwelling of Homer.

All the youths had assembled to hear the tale  
of his travel,  
Which by the chance of the moment had been  
before interrupted;  
Now they would hear of the way he had wandered  
to come to his poems,  
For they all would like to be Homers and sing  
of the heroes,  
Catching the glory of life in the lilt of a musical  
measure.

Glaucus was there, a youth from the banks of  
the eddying Xanthus,  
Mighty his ancestor was, Bellerophon, hero of  
Lycia;  
Warriors his race had been, but he now sought to  
be poet;  
Singing not doing the deed he held the better vocation.  
Other great names were present from lowland  
and upland of Asia:  
Gyges, Mysius, Nastes, son of a Phrygian monarch,  
Dardan from Gargarus nigh unto Troy, the city  
in ruins,

Aphroditorus the curled Milesian boy, Niobides  
Fresh from the tears of Sipylus — these may  
stand as examples;  
But the foremost was Glaucus, the son and the  
grandson of Glaucus,  
Far back tracing his blood to the veins of Bel-  
lerophonates.

Next, O Muse, thou must glance at the youths  
who crossed out of Europe.  
Young Demodocus came, who sprang from an  
order of singers,  
Living in Ithaca where they sang of the toils of  
Ulysses.  
Homer had been their guest when he touched  
their isle in his travels,  
Gathering wonderful Ithacan tales of voyages  
westward,  
Fabulous threads of song, like gossamers floating  
in sunshine,  
All to be caught by the poet and wove to a beau-  
tiful garment.  
Teucer of Salamis came, descended from Teucer  
the archer;  
Skill in handling the bow he possessed — the  
gift of Apollo,  
But the God had refused his other great gift —  
that of wisdom;  
Still the youth would be singer, and broke in  
scorn all his arrows,



Talent he had for the one, desire he felt for the  
other,  
Teucer could not what he would, and whatever  
he could he would not.  
Burly Plexippus was there, the richest scholar  
of Homer,  
Glossy and sleek were grazing his herds in  
Thessaly grassy,  
Thousands of horses were his that drank at the  
streams of Peneios,  
Palaces too he owned and held whole cities for  
barter;  
Somehow he thought he could simply exchange  
some cattle for verses,  
E'en the Pierian spring was his by virtue of  
money,  
Once for its waters he counted out pieces of gold  
and of silver,  
But though their fountain he bought, he never  
could purchase the Muses.  
When he returned to his country and held his  
Thessalian domains,  
All his thought was to buy up the home of the  
Gods, high Olympus,  
Then the Gods he deemed he possessed, possessing  
their mountain,  
And at his will he could call them down from their  
heights to his poem.

Other youths from the islands had come, and  
also from Argos,

But the Muse has not given their names excepting  
Sophrones,  
Clear Athenian soul, devoted to worship of  
Pallas,  
Moralist ever was he, the manifold maker of  
maxims.

Tall Hesperion too was present, just from the  
Northland,  
Sole barbarian there, yet eager to learn and to  
listen,  
Towering over the rest like Fate over beautiful  
Hellas;  
Strong were his features, yet melting to love in  
the sunshine of Chios.

One more scholar forget not, though first pres-  
ent this morning!  
There she stands behind by the door — the daugh-  
ter of Homer,  
Still by the door in the rear — she yet will ad-  
vance to the foreground.  
Shy are her glances, striving to hide her heart in  
her bosom,  
But they are tell-tales, and whisper the thought  
she is secretly thinking.

Voices arose which bade the poet go on with  
his story;  
Grappling awhile for his thought again he began  
his recital:

“ First I went over to Troy, and dwelt on its  
plain and its hillock,  
In the city destroyed I stayed and lived with its  
ruins,  
Which still talk to the traveler telling their story  
so fateful.  
Rivers I saw in the plain, and heard the God of  
Scamander  
Speak of the Heroes slain and many a furious  
battle,  
As he pointed to corselet and helmet and shield  
mid his rushes,  
Showing the skulls of the dead that grinned from  
the ooze of his stream bed.  
Thence I passed on the sea in a ship from island  
to island,  
Felt the favor of hoary Poseidon, and felt too his  
anger,  
When he would roll up the waves in a storm by  
the might of his trident;  
Him I once saw in his chariot scudding away on  
the billow  
Right into sunset, and leaving a fiery track  
through the waters.  
Glad for my life I was when I came to the main-  
land of Hellas,  
Peoples I saw, their cities and customs, but  
chiefly their legends  
Drew me to listen and gather each radiant shred  
of their spirit.

Heroes unknown I found everywhere, great men  
of their village,  
Whose high deeds were at festivals sung by their  
townsmen in worship,  
For each village its Hero must have and revere  
him divinely.  
Every bard in the country I heard and stored up  
his fables,  
Till the Delphian cleft which utters the measures  
prophetic,  
Till the Thesprotian land where speak the oaks of  
Dodona,  
Till the Olympian heights where Gods look  
down upon Hellas.  
And to Helicon came I and heard the song of its  
Muses,  
Singing a rival strain to the Sisters who sit on  
Parnassus;  
There I listened to Hesiod, crabbed old singer of  
Ascra,  
And I gave him a note of the song that was rising  
within me,  
I had already begun the new lay of the Gods and  
the Heroes.  
For a moment he ceased his complaints of man  
and of woman,  
Quit his dark world of monsters primeval and  
hazy huge Titans,  
Just long enough for a laugh to break out like a  
flash from a storm-cloud,

And to say to me: Friend, I shall visit thee  
sometime in Chios."

Here the poet himself was a smile and dropped  
into silence  
For a minute or more, and then he returned to  
his story:  
"Early to Argos I came and heard in a hymn the  
whole people  
Chanting the glory of Diomed, who was their  
valorous leader,  
How in the war of Troy he fought with the  
Gods, though a mortal,  
Fought with two Trojan Gods in the might of  
his heart, and he conquered;  
For the Greek though a man, must put down the  
God if a Trojan.  
'That' I said to myself 'is a note in the lay of  
our Hellas,  
In the grand lay of our Hellas that is a strain of  
the music;  
Part of the one vast temple of song in the soul  
of the nation,  
I shall take it and mould it and build it into my  
poem.'  
Each little fragment of life and each stray film  
of a story,  
Name of mountain, river and town, whatever I  
found there,

All I picked up on the spot, and began to weave  
them together,

By the aid of Mnemosyne, Muse who always re-  
members.

Then to Mycenæ I went, the golden, where  
dwelt Agamemnon,  
Through the portal I passed that was guarded  
above by the Lions,  
Fiercely glaring in stone at the man who entered  
their gateway.

Much the splendid city had waned from its old  
Trojan glory,

And the look of the sunset rested all day on its  
towers.

There I learned the King's fate at the hands of  
his wife Clytemnestra,

And the death of herself and her lover, both  
slain by Orestes.

Sad was the tale of the doomful House of the  
Monarch wide-ruling,

I could never refrain from repeating that tale in  
my measures,

Truest example, methinks, of the dealing of  
Gods with us mortals,

Still to be sung in many new poems to millions  
hereafter.

It will be poured into bronze, and hewn out of  
whitest of marble,

Told in tongues yet unborn, to measures unheard  
of in Hellas.

Wretched indeed is the man, if the Gods in his  
pride, he obey not ;  
Base Ægisthus, I feel in my heart the point of  
thy dagger !”

Fervidly spake the old man, and he seemed  
overcome by his story,  
Thinking the fate that befel the great prince  
of the Greeks, Agamemnon.  
To his own life the poet transmuted the lives  
of the Heroes,  
Every thread of a fable he span to a strand of  
his heart-strings,  
Each wild word of the wildest old legend he  
caught and transfigured,  
Unto each sorrow of mortal his bosom beat  
mighty responses ;  
Nobly the youths were led to revere the man in  
the poet.

Soon his gloom he had caught and flung it far  
back into Lethe,  
Whence at times it escapes in the brightest of  
souls up to daylight,  
And he began, in his countenance looking the  
look of the sunrise :  
“ Over the heights I scrambled, that was a coun-  
try of mountains !  
Woodmen I met in the forest, here and there a  
small hamlet,

But every where I could find some fragment of  
song or of story.  
Through the glens I passed of the piping Arcadian  
shepherds,  
Through the hills full of music down into the  
vale of Eurotas,  
Where lay Sparta — and there was the home of  
the beautiful Helen.  
Still the palace I saw in the sunlight, where Paris  
the Trojan  
As a guest was grandly received by the King  
Menelaus,  
And I saw too the glance of the eye and the  
thought of the woman,  
In its first flash to the fateful resolve — of wars  
the beginning!  
Madly I followed each step on the path of the  
sea as she fled thence,  
Feeling the glow and the guilt of a passionate  
world in each heart-beat,  
Watched her enter the ship, the sheltering ship of  
her lover,  
Watched it ride on the sea till it vanished afar on  
the waters.  
There I sank on the sand, as the dead man drops  
from the arrow  
Sent to his heart, and I died for a while in the  
battle of Helen.  
O Aphrodite, Goddess of joy that is paid with  
all sorrow,



Queen of the love that bears in its proof the bitterest vengeance,  
There I fell down the thrall of thy spell, but I  
    rose up the master.  
Thou dost also possess in thy right the soul of  
    the singer,  
I was Paris myself and I fled to the East with my  
    Helen,  
Troy I was too and its siege, I was taken and  
    burnt into ashes;  
But I am also the law which is read in the flames  
    of the city,  
And I am the stern judgment of Gods who speak  
    from its ruins."

When the poet had stopped in the rush of his  
    words for a moment,  
See! a youth stands forth with a flash in his eye  
    like a falchion,  
Lycian Glaucus it is, from the banks of the eddy-  
    ing Xanthus,  
Grandson of Glaucus who fell in the war by the  
    walls of the Trojans,  
Sprung of the seed of Heroes, though poesy  
    now he has chosen;  
Standing forth from the ranks of his friends, thus  
    says he to Homer:  
"Helen belonged to our side, for she was the  
    woman of beauty,

We had to take her and keep her, or lose the  
heritage lovely,  
Basely resign it to others, and yield up the claim  
of fair Asia.  
Twenty years she was ours, of all the great war  
she was worthy,  
Twenty years she was ours, and we paid but the  
price of a city,  
Even one moment of Helen is worth all the losses  
of Priam."

Scarce had he done when a valorous youth  
sprang out of the front-line  
From the opposite ranks, as if to respond to the  
challenge ;  
It was Demodocus, son of Demodocus, Ithaca's  
singer,  
Now in the school of the poet to learn the new  
song of the ages ;  
Far in advance was the song of all that were sung  
in his country  
By the old bards, his fathers. Pointing his finger  
at Glaucus,  
Raising his arm and smiting the air at each word,  
he spoke thus :  
" Yes, we smote you, we burnt you, we bound you  
when sated with slaughter,  
Women we seized and your wealth, we wasted  
the city and country.

Little was left in the land, in your gore we  
    painted our glory,  
And the same fate awaits you again if you come  
    to the trial.  
Helen, the prize of the world, you had to sur-  
    render forever."

Each of the fiery speakers had spoken his speech  
    in a fury;  
See the turn! how strange! they are looking no  
    more at each other.  
Both of them bending the head, they covertly  
    glance at one object,  
Right at one point where stands the beautiful  
    daughter of Homer,  
As if Helen she were, to be fought for and won  
    by a nation.  
But in the background quite overtopping them  
    all stood the stranger,  
Just behind the fair daughter he stood and  
    seemed to be weighing,  
Dreamful, blue-eyed Hesperion, yesterday come  
    from the Northland,  
Now he seemed to be weighing two weights in  
    the scales of a balance.

In the midst of the din the poet uprose from  
    his settle,  
As great Zeus on Olympus, the God of the Greeks  
    and the Trojans,

Who looks down to the earth and judges the  
struggle of mortals.

Homer suddenly saw the old conflict arise in his  
scholars,

Every battle at Troy was still in them — how  
could they help it?

From the East and the West they had come, from  
Hellas and Asia,

Deep is that scission of soul and of time — a  
breach everlasting,

Not to be healed but by one who is both the  
victor and vanquished,

Who can feel the defeat triumphant, the triumph  
defeated,

Who can be slayer and slain, and rise up new-  
born from his ashes.

Homer united both sides, and both saluted him  
poet,

What in them was a discord, he turned into har-  
mony lasting,

What was twain in their lives, in his he made one  
and a poem.

All had their own completeness in him, so hailed  
him as master.

When to speak he began, one word changed  
strife into concord:

“ Hold, O youths,” he cried, “ cease wrangling  
at once in my presence;

Learn from to-day just what is the bondage you  
are to get rid of ;  
Free is the poet, but free you are not when ruled  
by a passion ;  
Whole he must be, but whole you are not when  
halved into parties ;  
Music you never will make if the soul hath a  
break in its tension.  
Hear entirely ; now let us go on with the rest of  
my story.  
Over to Pylos I passed, and saw the land of sage  
Nestor,  
Who returned to his home from the war un-  
troubled by tempest,  
Or by the wrath of the Gods, which wrecked so  
many returning.  
Older than I am he was when at Troy, and yet a  
good soldier,  
Fond of the fight, but of telling a tale of his youth  
still fonder.  
Thence I sailed to Ithaca where I heard of  
Ulysses,  
Wisest of men, he endured ; and enduring, he  
rose in his wisdom ;  
Great were his deeds at Troy, for he was the  
Hero who took it,  
Mounting its walls by the wooden horse that was  
winged with his cunning ;  
Over Achilles he rises, through might of the  
spirit's contrivance.

But yet greater his task was after the city had  
fallen;  
To return was the Hero's work, to return to his  
country  
And to his wife, through storms of the sea and  
himself in his doubting.  
Wandering through the whole world that lies out  
the sunlight of Hellas,  
Into the magical islands beyond the bounds of  
our knowledge,  
Suffering sailed he on, though losing all his  
companions;  
Ithacan bards there told me his tale of the Cyclops,  
of Circe,  
Even through Hades he passed, through the realm  
of spirits departed;  
Living, the Hero must go beyond life, and return  
to the living.  
Thither I followed him too, in my age I told his  
adventures,  
Bringing him back to Penelope prudent and  
Ithaca sunny;  
Last of my song is this, it has just lately been  
finished,  
Though some parts have been sung long since at  
the festivals Chian,  
Showing a glimpse of the West where men find  
always their new-world."

Thus he spake, and he turned, though blind,  
with his face to the sundown,  
Where in his path Hesperion, thoughtful, was  
standing in silence;  
But before he began, interposed Sophrones of  
Athens:

“Why such a liar and rogue did you make him,  
your hero Ulysses?”

“Penalty too he must pay, the penalty even of  
wisdom,”

Answered Homerus, thoughtful, forecasting his  
words for his scholars.

Low and slow he now spoke, as if with his soul  
he were talking:

“Always the deed must be paid for, the doer  
heroic must suffer,

Virtue arouses revenges and duty may call up the  
Furies;

Double the conflict must be, and the right may  
also be double.

O Ulysses, great was thy action, but followed by  
curses!

The reward of thy life will be centuries full of  
reproaches!

Wrongful men thou didst pay with their wrong,  
for this expect judgment;

Thou didst meet the guileful with guile, smite  
foes with their weapons,

Thou shalt be rated as guileful and cruel in turn  
for thine action.  
Compensation, the law, has been laid by the  
Gods upon me too,  
All the sunshine of nature is dark in spite of my  
vision,  
Insight the Muses have given, but for it my sight  
has been taken."

Such was the answer, but it met not the need  
of Sophrones,  
Who was the moralist trying old tales with the  
touchstone of virtue,  
Easily solving the problem heroic by rule or a  
maxim,  
Excellent maxim for men who have not the stress  
of the problem.  
Thus the worthy Sophrones tested the life of the  
Hero,  
Putting his standard to each and measuring  
strictly the defect.  
Hear him again, for always Sophrones has one  
other question :  
" Which was right, the Greek or the Trojan?  
That is the point now,  
Truly the point to be settled before I can enter  
this calling.  
Much I have been worried about it, and still no  
decision.



Ere I can sing, I must know just what is and  
who are the righteous.  
Dare I confess? I like not Achilles, Ulysses,  
not Helen,  
Beautiful Helen — she is not beautiful seen by  
my vision,  
Nor can I love Penelope prudent with all of her  
cunning;  
Aye, the Gods of Olympus I like not, I cannot  
adore them;  
Zeus do you think I can worship, a God with the  
passions that I have?"

Homer, the poet, was silent; Sophrones, however, grew louder:  
"Best of them all is Hector the Trojan, the man  
most perfect,  
True to the wife of his heart and doing his duty  
to country,  
Brave as a lion in war and gentle at home as a  
woman.  
But, like the good man always, he had to fall in  
the struggle,  
And by fate to lose what he fought for — his  
cause and his city.  
Such is the world — the great men are bad and  
the good men must perish."

On the spot the sparkles were flying from one  
of the scholars,

It was Glaucus who spoke, the fiery Lycian bard-  
ling :

“ He was right — great Hector — defending  
his home and his nation

From the wanton attack of the bandits who sought  
to destroy them ;

Valiant in every way he was for his land and his  
people,

He is the Hero of Homer, I say, the only true  
Hero ;

Hector was right, will be right forever, and he was  
a Trojan.”

Then he turned to one of the company seeking  
approval,

Just from one and no more he sought it — the  
daughter of Homer,

Not from the father the poet, but from the beau-  
tiful daughter

Sought he the meed of a glance for his verses,  
but she beheld not,

For she was looking away from the youths in an-  
other direction.

But in answer Demodocus spoke, his vigorous  
rival,

Rival not only in verse, but also in love of the  
maiden :

“ Yes, but he fought for the thing that was  
wrong and he knew it — your Hector !

For the rape of Helen he fought and made it his  
own thus ;  
Aye, the good husband battled in Troy to keep  
wife from husband.  
What in his soul he condemned, he supported by  
arms and by words too,  
And so died of a lie in his life and the spear of  
Achilles.”

Suiting the act to the speech, Demodocus drew  
back and lifted  
Hand and arm to a poise, as if he were hurling the  
weapon  
Straight at Hector, to slay him before the battle-  
ments Trojan ;  
Lycian Glaucus shrank not, but leaped to the  
front at the challenge.  
Great was the uproar ; the war of Troy once  
more was beginning  
Right in the school of Homer, but quickly the  
master bade silence :  
“ Hearken, O youths, what I say, and learn  
by example a lesson !  
Not a part is the poet, nor is he owned by a  
party.  
On which side do I sing in my poem — the Greek  
or the Trojan ?  
Mark it — on both and on neither ; the will of  
Zeus is accomplished,

God supreme of the Hellenes, rising above all  
conflict.

Not with another, but with himself is the poet's  
true struggle,

He is the slayer and slain and his soul is the  
place of the battle.

Much I think with the Greeks and much I feel  
with the Trojans,

These have my heart perchance, but those take  
hold of my reason;

Zeus too loves his dear children in Troy, but de-  
cides for Achæa.

Ah, the poet must fight in himself the dolorous  
combat,

As the God fought the God in the fray on the  
heights of Olympus;

Wounds he cannot escape, he must bleed in the  
battle on both sides;

Showing the strife of the time, he shows too the  
strife in his bosom,

But he must heal it — just that is the seal of the  
God on the singer;

Rage, war, battles he sings, but also the peace  
and atonement,

Sings great Achilles in wrath, and reconciled  
sings great Achilles.

Now let the truce be confirmed between both  
the Greeks and the Trojans,

And in our joy we shall pour to the Gods a hearty  
libation."

Tall Hesperion silently heard the dispute of the  
bardlings,  
Much he had learned about Hellas, and seen the  
two sides of the conflict,  
Seen it still living and parting atwain the new  
generation,  
Who were ready to fight over Troy, and over its  
poem.  
But the best was, he saw the poet bring both  
sides to oneness,  
Out of discordance bring harmony lofty of men  
and of Gods too,  
Making the tumult of war sing the song of  
Olympian order.

Homer in happiest mood uprose and continued  
his talking :  
“ Youths, Demodocus, Glaucus, now heal ye the  
wounds of each other,  
Thinking the thought of high Zeus, as it sings to  
a melody god-born,  
Speaking divinity's word which is sprung of the  
soul's recognition.  
Valiant ye be, but let us proclaim, the war is  
now over,  
All in one joy to-day let the East and the West  
greet as brothers,  
Each of them taking the best of the other as  
test of his spirit !”

Turning aside, he spoke out the word of command in a transport :

“Speed thee, Amyntas, my boy, a full jar of old Chian, the oldest,

Ten years’ ripe let it be, for age in the wine bringeth wisdom

Back to the drinker, in concord attuning anew the lost temper,

Bringing the oneness of truth into souls that differ by nature.

Here comes the wine, already I catch a whiff of its fragrance,

Oldest of Chian it is, a God would mistake it for nectar.

Glaucus, Demodocus, Gyges, Plexippus, and Aphroditorus,

Noble Hesperion also, thou valorous youth of the Northland,

Pledge now a health to yourselves, and pour to the Gods a libation.”

All the youths of the school, most willing, obeyed the good master,

Touched loving lips to the brim of the wine on the rim of the beaker,

Pledging a health to themselves and pouring to Gods a libation.

Hark ! mid the draught a shrill noise is disturbing the flow of the liquid,

'Tis the rickety gate as grinding it grates on its hinges.  
Opening first to a push, then backward it slams  
with a racket;  
What is the shape that noisily enters and  
shuffles along there?  
Man well-known in Chios he is, well-known unto  
Homer,  
Satisfied man with himself he seems by the turn  
of his features.  
That is the pedagogue, first of the island, the lord  
of the laurel,  
Which he doth use as a switch for teaching the  
verses of poets,  
Teaching the boys of his school the glory and  
gift of the Muses,  
Whose fair branch he now twirls in his hand as  
he turns up the pathway.  
Terrible pedagogue Chian he comes, the thrasher  
and slasher,  
Thrashing the youths into lore and slashing the  
poets to pieces,  
Into the school of Homer he walks — he is here —  
O Typtodes !

VI.

Terpsichoré.

*The Pedagogue Chian.*



## ARGUMENT.

*A rival school to that of Homer is taught by Typtodes, the Chian schoolmaster, who comes one day to have a short visit with the poet. Typtodes is the severe critic of Homer's poems, and cuts them to pieces quite as some modern professors have done. But the schoolmaster is a progressive man and is now specially interested in the new script which has been brought from Phœnicia. In fact he is giving to the poems of Homer their first alphabetic dress in spite of his criticism. It turns out that Typtodes has really come to see the daughter of the poet, though he disguises the fact. But his bitter criticism is modified by the wine which Homer causes to be brought him, and his final questions are in a different vein from his first utterances. A new man appears who will give some answer to what Typtodes has asked.*

Not alone and unchallenged the poet held sway  
in his city,  
There was a rival in Chios, who in his realm was  
the ruler.  
Most of the youths of the place were sent to the  
school of Typtodes,  
Crusty Typtodes, a far-famed trouncer of boys  
into learning,  
Tickling bare legs of Greek boys till they danced  
to the sprig of his laurel,  
Which he always held in his hand while he made  
them con verses,  
Rousing the Muses unwilling by use of their  
favorite symbol.

(115)

Some were verses struck at a heat from the heart  
of a poet,  
With an Olympian might, and flowing and glowing  
forever  
In the fire and flash of the words of the primal  
conception.  
But the others, the most, were his own, the pedagogue's  
verses,  
Made without a mistake according to rule in his  
school-room,  
Flawlessly made out of wood, the toughest wood  
in the forest.

In his sandals he shuffles along the loose stones  
of the pathway;  
Slyly he shuffles and seems to be slipping about  
on his tiptoes,  
As the schoolmaster warily slippeth around in  
the school-room,  
Seeking to catch in the act the bad boy who is  
making the mischief.  
Gaunt and ungainly the man, and somewhat  
stilted in posture,  
Sparse was the beard, each hair from his visage  
shot out like a bristle  
Ready to stick and to prick any person approaching  
too near him,  
Even the kiss of Typtodes had the keen point of  
a briar.

Thin was the nap on his garment, exact each step  
that he took there,  
Always the branch of the laurel he held in his  
hand while walking  
Had in its swaying upward and downward the  
look of precision.  
Sharp was the thrust of his eye, as it peered from  
the hole of the eyebrows,  
Slightly barbed was the point of his nose, no  
mercy allowing,  
No escape for the foe; his whole visage seemed  
pointed and ready,  
Even his look was a cut and his tongue had two  
edges of sharpness.  
Yet the man had his virtues — industry, feeling  
of duty,  
Faith in knowledge he never gave up, in spite of  
reverses,  
And, on the whole, he believed in the movement  
of men to the better.  
Bearer of light to Chios he was, when the day  
was beginning,  
Homer he was not, and yet but for him there had  
been no Homer,  
Whom he first put into script from the word and  
made everlasting,  
By the skill which he had in tracing Phœnician  
letters.  
This fair day he has come to have a good visit  
with Homer,

Whom as a man he liked, as a fellow-craftsman  
respected,  
Deeming himself to be, however, the much better poet,  
Though the world had passed on the men a different judgment.

He had heard of the beauty, too, of the daughter  
of Homer ;  
Living in the same town all his life he never had  
seen her,  
Never had seen her, though knowing by heart  
every word of her parent.  
Not too young to be curious, not too old was  
Typtodes,  
Pedagogue Chian who sought for a glimpse of  
the beautiful maiden,  
Though, of course, he pretended to come for a  
chat with the father.

Settled down in his seat he began to talk of his  
methods,  
How the rule had been found, and the glory was  
great of the finder.  
“ Yes, methinks I have brought to perfection this  
science of teaching !  
Surely not much will the schoolmaster have to be  
doing hereafter  
But to follow, ages on ages, the steps of Typtodes.

What great progress to-day we are making in  
every department !  
Some weeks ago a new churn was invented by  
Phagon of Samos,  
Hither he brought it at once and showed it around  
in our island ;  
Soon each household of Chios will have it, soon  
will be churning,  
Churning away for dear life the milk of the kine  
of the country ;  
Barbarous oil-eating Greeks will change into  
eaters of butter,  
That is improvement, that, I call, the grand  
march of the species !  
Only one fear I cannot help feeling amid all our  
progress ;  
All the world will have nothing to do , and so will  
do nothing,  
After that we are gone, and have left it the fruit  
of our labor ;  
Idleness is the great curse, our children will have  
to be idle ;  
Such is my fear ; so I one day have resolved to  
take easy ;  
Having dismissed my school, I would dally awhile  
in your garden,  
Leave the words of the poem behind and talk with  
the poet.”

Here he stopped for a moment and slyly was  
peeping around him,

Once, twice, thrice he looked, and every look was  
a question,  
Asking, "Where, I wonder?" but without any  
answer,  
Though he could hear a sweet stray note now and  
then from an arbor.  
In its stead unwilling he heard the voice of old  
Homer :  
" Friend, have you any new light on the dark way  
of life? — O give it —  
Some fresh word upon fate or the law or the  
wonderful secret;  
Eyesight is gone, and often I feel the bounds of  
my insight;  
Often I feel the bounds of the word in the stress  
of the spirit."

Then began in the height of his mood the peda-  
gogue Chian :  
" We have lately been reading, or rather reciting  
your poems,  
Since in the school or the market they still for  
the ear are recited,  
Though I myself can read those recent Phœnician  
symbols,  
Catching the sound of the voice in the devious  
tracery of letters ;  
I alone of all of the men in the island of Chios,  
I can wind out the labyrinth weird made of  
strange Alpha-Beta,

Follow the clew to the end and bring back the  
prize that is hidden,  
Hidden away by a spell in the heart of the char-  
acters mystic.  
Into those signs I have been transforming the  
voice of your verses,  
Scratching the musical sound into signs which  
now are called letters,  
Magical symbols of fast-fleeting speech, which  
fix it forever,  
Holding it firm to the sight when the tongue  
which spake it, is silent.  
But not yet I have seen your beautiful daughter,  
Homerus,  
Whom Fame whispers abroad in every nook of  
our Hellas."

"O good man," said the poet, "aught more  
would I hear of this wonder,  
Which has caught and is holding the word to  
make it eternal;  
Fate forbids me to see it, Oh then let me learn of  
the marvel  
Changing the world at a stroke by giving the past  
to the future."

Crabbed Typtodes perchance was not pleased  
with the turn of the answer,  
But he began on the spot to speak out the thing  
that was in him:



“ Let that pass — all that which I said of Phœnician letters.

We have glanced these days down into the depths of your poems ;

Now I am going to speak you the word of friendship and frankness.

You, I find, are not accurate, shifting the dates of your action,

Not quite correct in the facts, and you give your twist to the story.

All your tales of the Gods are turned to the bent of your thinking,

Somehow changed from the old they seem to be bearing your impress.

Often you make in your spring important mistakes in the measure,

Short where it ought to be long, and long where it ought to be shortened,

Forcing the stress of the voice in places where it belongs not.

And I hold the hexameter is not fit for your poem,

Which, so rapid in movement, should not be delayed by the meter ;

If you only had asked me, I could have told you a better.

Nay, I deem that measure not suitable to the Greek language,

Which has a boisterous genius not to be swaddled in long clothes ;

You should remember from Troy the Greeks no  
longer are babies.

Hark to a verse of your poem, describing far-  
darting Apollo,

Which should be simple and rapid and grand,  
divine in its movement;

Slowly it drags along and cumpers its flight with  
its lumber,

Then at the end it suddenly whisks and swashes  
its tail round.

What a blasphemy! Phœbus will take from his  
quiver an arrow,

Sly invisible arrow, penalty due to the Muses,

Put the notch to the bow-string and pull it — be-  
hold! who is stricken!"

Warmed to his work was shrilly Typtodes,  
and so he continued,

Cruelly lashing himself into slashing to frag-  
ments the poet:

"And that mixture of words from every part of  
our Hellas,

Mixture poetic of fragments of speech from  
island and mainland,

Doric, Ionic, Æolic, how can it ever be lasting?

It is a wonder that people to-day are willing to  
hear it;

No such jargon has ever been spoken by Greek  
or Barbarian,

Crumbs from the table of tongues — and that is  
the language of Homer.

Though to nature it be not kin, still I put it in  
writing,

And I study it too, though I have to tear it to  
fragments;

What seems substance turns in my hands to the  
flimsiest shadow,

I confess I have pleasure in knocking nothing to  
pieces,

All to pieces I knock it so that it appears to be  
something. ”

Satisfied well with his work, Typtodes contin-  
ued in judgment:

“ Nor are your characters always consistent,  
however heroic,

Diomed changes, Ulysses is never the same in  
two stories,

And your implacable Hero is placated twice in  
his anger.

Homer himself is never the same, but shifts to  
another,

Dozens and dozens of Homers I find ensconced  
in your verses.

Your large poem doth fall of itself into many  
small poems,

Which, I know, were sung by hundreds of singers  
before you,

Who were the primitive makers of what you have  
gathered and taken ;  
You are but a collection of songs, a string of  
loose ballads,  
You are not one and a plan, but many you are  
and planless.  
Now I shall state to your face the final result of  
my wisdom :  
Homer, aye Homer himself is not the true author  
of Homer."

Up rose the pedagogue Chian and stretched to  
the height of his stature,  
Whirled his ponderous arm as if a boy he were  
flogging,  
Slashing the verses of Homer, a pupil he seemed  
to be thrashing,  
Terrible pedagogue Chian, the slasher and  
thrasher Typtodes.

But in response he called up the cheerful humor  
of Homer :  
"Take my book and study it further ; perchance  
you can read it  
In that new sort of script which you say has come  
from Phœnicia.  
One is the book if you are one and can ever be  
happy,  
Wholeness first being found in yourself, is found  
then outside you,

I am halved and quartered if you are a half or a  
quarter,  
But a whole I shall be, if you are a whole in my  
study;  
Discord enough you will find in my poem, if you  
be discordant,  
Discord enough in the world if harmony to you  
be wanting.  
But those wonderful letters — would I might see  
them and read them !  
Ere I pass from this earth, I would know the  
Phœnician letters !”

Mild was the manner and sweet was the voice  
of the godlike singer,  
Dropping transparent as pearls the beautiful  
words of his wisdom,  
Showing in chilly old age the upspring of young  
aspiration.  
But that terrible fragment of man, the trouncer  
Typtodes,  
Spake once more, and showed in his voice a dash  
of resentment :  
“ My next business will be to cut up your book  
into ballads,  
I shall put the keen knife of this brain to each  
joint of your body,  
Though I be but a half or a quarter, or less than  
a quarter,

You shall be smaller than I am, you I shall chop  
into mince-meat."

"In dissecting, oft the dissector himself is  
dissected;

What to another he fits, may fit just the fitter,"  
said Homer.

"What a prophet you are? In you I foresee the  
grand army

Who will cut me and stab me with every sort of  
a weapon,

Gashing and slashing my whole poetical body  
to fragments.

Still I affirm your army so grand can never defeat  
me,

I shall remain as I am, the wounds will return to  
the giver.

But let us stop this pitiful wrangle, it wholly  
untunes me;

Harmony, wisdom, hope it hath not, but ends in  
mere nothing.

Cheerful now let us pour to the Gods a hearty  
libation,

Then let us pour to ourselves a good draught in  
the warmth of our worship."

Mellowed at once to the rhythm of wine Typ-  
todes gave answer:

"Now you are truly a poet, with fresh inspira-  
tion you touch me;

Wine is a poem in drops, which you easily sip in  
small verselets;  
That hexameter which you just made while urging  
libation,  
Was a good one — the best, to my taste, you  
ever have spoken.  
Better, I think, I shall now understand the drift  
of your verses."

Look! a beautiful figure has flitted past to the  
garden;  
Is it a sudden dream, a phantom of vision fantastic?  
No; Typtodes has caught a glimpse of the  
daughter of Homer,  
Caught one fitful glimpse of the shape of the  
beautiful maiden,  
More he longed for and looked for, but he received  
not the second.

"Now I would know," he said, "how you build  
with such skill your grand temple,  
How you turn your soul into music that flows in  
your measures,  
How you turn all the world into harmony wedded  
to beauty,  
How you call down the Gods themselves from the  
heights of Olympus?"  
"Bravely," the poet replied, "you aim at the  
white of the mark now;

But it is not my calling to point out the path of  
the Muses  
In their flight through the air down to men from  
the top of Parnassus.  
Surely enough it is if I hear them when they are  
singing,  
And repeat their melodious strain in its fullness  
to mortals.  
Faint is the note at first, but it goes on extending  
and swelling,  
Till it sweeps to its musical train the whole earth  
and the heaven,  
Tuning the discord below and above, of men and  
of Gods too.”  
“ But whence cometh the world of the Gods and  
their sway on Olympus?  
To the beginning I wish to return and make my  
inquiry.”

So spake Typtodes, when a new figure rose  
over a hillock  
Walking out of the distance, amid the orchard of  
olives.  
“ Aye, whence cometh the man, who goes to the  
Houses of Hades?  
What is he here for — the mortal of clay once  
shaped by Prometheus?  
And the woman, his mate, the beautiful, fateful,  
what is she? ”



Asking he glanced to the right and the left for  
the daughter of Homer,  
Nowhere he saw her, but in her stead he beheld  
through the leaflets,  
Slowly approaching, the man he had seen before  
in the distance.

Such were the questions which eager Typtodes  
put to Homerus,  
Who replied not, but seemed of something else to  
be thinking.  
Hark to the groan of the gate which suddenly  
grinds on its hinges!

VII.

**Melpomene.**

*The Singer of Ascra.*

(131)

## ARGUMENT.

*The person approaching turns out to be Hesiod, the poet of Ascra in Bœotia, whom Homer had met in his travels and whom he had invited to come on a visit to Chios. Hesiod is received by his brother poet, and tells his story of the Gods, and his view of the world. He, too, will see and know the daughter of Homer, though he has no good opinion of woman. Finally he beholds her, when, for a sarcasm on her sex, she gives him a tart reply. The old Greek misogynist and pessimist slips away from the company, and vanishes out of Chios at the appearance of another woman, the songstress of Lesbos.*

All start up at the stridulous sound to see what is  
coming,  
When a stranger moves into the path of the  
eye to the heavens,  
Leisurely comes down the walk which leads to the  
garden of Homer,  
Beautiful garden of fruit and of flowers, of shade  
and of sunshine.  
Broad and bony the hand of the man, and  
knotted the knuckles,  
Trained to whirling the ax by the helve in the  
woods on the mountain,  
Trained to holding the plow by the handle in  
turning the furrow,  
Used to toil were his palms, and hardened to  
horn by his labor.

(133)

Great strong lines he had in his face dividing it  
crosswise,  
Also dividing it lengthwise to network of valley and mountain,  
Which would rise and fall into billows of rough corrugations:  
Surely that face was a battle, the battle of Gods and of Titans,  
Seizing and hurling volcanoes aflame in their wrath at each other.  
Under his features was lying a scowl, which seemed to be born there,  
Which would dart from its lair in his look, spitting fire like a dragon;  
Strange was the tone of his speech, yet stranger his play of grimaces,  
Lips would writhe at each word, as if it were sore to be spoken.  
Hark! he is ready to speak and turns to the poet of Chios:

“Over the sea I have come in a ship from the mainland of Hellas;  
Voyage unblest, for Poseidon was trying each minute to drown me,  
Dashing his waves on the craft and mightily cleaving the waters;  
Often he opened his jaws and shut them tight on the vessel,

How I escaped I know not, but salted and scared  
I escaped him.

Heavy Bœotia is my home, my village is Ascra,  
Ugly village of Ascra, vile in the summer and  
winter.

There I sang of the Birth of the Gods and the  
Works of poor mortals,  
Mortals, who sweating and swinking in life, die  
at last in a discord."

"What a note is that in the sunlight of Chios,"  
cried Homer,

"Who art thou, man? Some tricks of thy voice  
I have heard in my travels."

Twisting his face into scowls, as if he were tasting  
of wormwood,

Spake the poet of Ascra, and spitefully spat out  
the bitter:

"Well thou knowest, for thou hast borrowed  
some of my verses,

Hiding the source in a word, thou hast called it  
the breath of the Muses.

Once I sang for thee when thou hadst come to  
my home in thy journey,

Sang of the eldest Gods who were born of Chaos  
primeval,

For I like to go back to the start, though it be  
all in darkness,

Origin ever I seek, although I can never quite  
reach it.

What a pleasure to run from the sheen of the  
sun back to nothing!  
This Olympian order of thine, it came of disorder,  
Which is my burden of song reaching back to  
the very beginning;  
Even this beautiful day now sporting in joy of  
the sunshine,  
Not long ago was born of the night and to night  
it returneth."

"Hail, O brother," said Homer, the bard, to  
the poet of Ascra,  
"I have heard thee before on Helicon — now I  
remember —  
Bleak was the day and hoarse was the wind that  
blew up the valley.  
Be at home, O guest; give us more of thy song —  
I would listen."

Then again the poet of Ascra seemed tasting of  
wormwood,  
Ere his strain he began in the stress of a mighty  
upheaval;  
Soon into thunderous words he let out the soul  
of old Chaos:  
"All this isle, this world, as we see it, was once  
but a monster,  
Peopled with monsters grim in the grey of the  
distant aforetime;

There I love to dwell with old Cronus who swallowed his offspring,  
Even to Uranus oft I go back for a gaze in the twilight,  
And I dally with Nereus, parent of beautiful daughters,  
Thousandfold forms of the billows' rising, rolling, retreating,  
Fleeting forever away in the haze of the distant horizon,  
Leaping anew into life as they rise to the top of the sea-swell.  
O for the mightiest monsters of old! I tell you,  
I like them;  
All day long I could sing of the terrible brood of the Gorgons,  
Triple-headed, hundred-handed, thousand-legged, Cerberus, Briareus, Hydra, Chimæra, Echidna the lizard;  
What is Olympus to these, with its Gods who dwell in the sunshine!  
Once in this world lived a people I loved — the Giants and Titans,  
Who could hurl as weapons of war huge mountains and rivers,  
Heaven itself they would storm and break down the limit of mortals,  
Which the Gods once set in their envy when man they created.



Long the battle was fought, the stormers of  
heaven were vanquished,  
Now see them whirl — down, down they spin to  
Tartarus sooty,  
By the Olympians whisked off the earth-ball to  
infinite spaces,  
Where they lie under ban of falling, falling for-  
ever.  
Still in the Upperworld sunny they wrought for  
the ages great wonders;  
This fair island, this sea, yon mountains are  
showing their power.  
Lofty, grandiloquent words are my colors, by  
which I can paint them,  
Words that are sung in mine ear by the high  
Heliconian Muses,  
Loving the mighty and monstrous and piling up  
horror on horror ”

“ Hold, for mercy ! ” cried Homer, “ let me  
catch breath for a moment,  
For I seem to be falling, falling along with your  
Titans,  
Down to black Tartarus whirling I spin in a  
spiral headforemost.  
Poet, is there no light in your world, no beauti-  
ful order ? ”

Curling his lip to a scowl, responded the singer  
of Ascrea :

“I cannot say that I like your Olympian sunshine, Homerus,  
All of your deities stand too clear in the sweep  
of my eyesight,  
Cut into words they walk as if they were moving  
to marble,  
Gods in my thought should break over bounds  
into limitless regions,  
Break over all of the forms of fair life into infinite fancy.  
Give me the view far away o’er the deeps of  
Oceanus hoary,  
And his thousands of children with all the dim  
train of the sea-gods,  
Breaking, creating their shapes with every new  
dash of the wavelet,  
Riding the steeds of the sea and leaping from  
billow to billow.  
Homer, I come to pay thee a visit once promised  
at Ascra;  
And I have heard of a beautiful maiden now  
dwelling in Chios.”  
“Welcome again, O friend,” said Homer;  
“some wine in a goblet,  
Speed thee Amyntas, my boy — some Chian wine  
for the poet.”

But the musical guest in response made a face  
full of discord,  
For in spite of himself he longed to behold the  
fair daughter.

Disappointed, he turned once more to the tale of  
his terrors:

“Dragons I love, if human, and forms of the  
sphinxes and griffons,

Forms commingled of man and of beast, which  
sprang from the Orient.

You, O Homer, have driven my monsters away  
to the background,

Far in the background of Hellas they lie under  
curse of your spirit,

Where they will stay by your spell, I fear, in  
the darkness forever.

—No, again they will rise,” spake the poet of  
Ascrea prophetic,

“Out of the night they will rise and bask in the  
sheen of Apollo,

Far in the future I see them step to the light  
from their hiding,

They will riot around in the world as in times of  
the Titans,

Storming Olympus again in the might of their  
struggle for heaven,

They will battle with Gods on the earth and the  
air and the ocean,

Till the Underworld sunless will rumble and  
quake in its terror.”

Here a youth stepped forth, he had recently  
come from the Northland,

Tall Hesperion, who from a dream had been  
roused by the story,

Roused by the mention of Giants, the dwellers of  
mountain and iceberg,  
Calling to mind his own far country in landscape  
and legend.

Thus he spake in response to the poet of Ascra  
foretelling :

“ Truth you have spoken, I know it; those mon-  
sters are living and thriving  
Just at this moment far up in the nebulous tract  
of the Northland  
Where they fight with the fire and sport with the  
frost of the icefield ;  
Mighty and massive those Giants of cold, the  
Hyperboréans,  
Never I thought I would find them here in the  
sunbeams of Hellas,  
Even in story I did not expect to be told of their  
wonders,  
Though they be sitting in Tartarus sooty, the  
cheerless, the hopeless.  
Tell me your name, O stranger, for I would  
carry it with me,  
When I return to my land with the name and the  
song of great Homer,  
Both of you banded together shall go to my home  
in the Northland.”

With a gleam of rude joy responded the singer  
of Ascra,  
Fame he reproached and despised and yet he  
longed to be famous :

“ I am called Hesiod, younger in song than  
Homer, yet older,  
Earliest Gods I have sung and the latest of all —  
Prometheus,  
Friend of poor lost man, and the sufferer, too, for  
his goodness;  
Sufferer God-born he lay in his anguish on Cau-  
casus lonely.  
But the strange spell of my life! I cannot get  
rid of the woman!  
On me has rested a curse, the curse of that  
charmer Pandora,  
Once created by Zeus, endowed by each God with  
his talent,  
Born with craft in her heart, then sent upon man  
for his evil.  
Off and away! good Homer, I whisper the hope  
of my journey!  
Much I have heard in my land of a girl now grown  
to a woman,  
Can I not see, perchance, now converse with the  
beautiful maiden?  
Vain is my visit to-day if I see not the daughter  
of Homer;  
More than Helen she is, aye more than the gifted  
Pandora.”

“ Here comes Amyntas,” said Homer, “ bear-  
ing the fragrance of Chios;  
What a perfume of the wine as he steps in the  
gate of the garden!

Well, that boy is a flower that blooms with the  
scent of old Bacchus!  
I can trace his path in the air without hear-  
ing his footstep.  
Drink now a cupful of tears that were shed on the  
beautiful island,  
Tears of the wine-god which tell not the sorrow  
but joy of the godhood."

Hesiod turned up the cup, and drank off the  
vintage of Chios,  
Generous vintage of Chios, that lightens the soul  
of the singer.  
And that cup was a wonder, with figures that  
danced in a circle,  
Forms of maidens and youths that danced in a  
ring round the wine-cup,  
Wrought by the cunning of Chalcon the smith, and  
given to Homer,  
When in his youth he sang for the prize and won  
in the contest,  
Won the fair prize in a contest with deep-toned  
Ariston his teacher.  
So they sipped off the wine from their beakers a  
moment in silence,  
Hesiod, Homer, the great Greek singers were sip-  
ping together  
There in Chios the wine that is good for the Gods  
and us mortals,  
Good for libations to Gods and a slaking of thirst  
unto mortals.

Soon they were done, for they loved, not the  
frenzy, but joy of the wine-god.

“Dearest my daughter, where art thou?  
Come hither and lead me,” said Homer.

But he heard no response, so he called out again:  
Praxilla!

What is the matter? where is the maiden? Gone  
on an errand?

No, she was looking just then in a dream from  
a nook of her arbor,

Whence she could gaze on the fair-haired, blue-  
eyed youth of the Northland,

Wondering what she would do if she went to  
the folk of the icefields.

Of a sudden she woke from her wonder and  
sprang to her father,

Speaking mid blushes: “I was not gone, behold,  
I am present.”

But the flashes of red spake louder that what  
she had spoken,

Truer than words in telling the truth of the heart  
that is hidden.

Then they passed from the house for a stroll  
mid the trees and the vineyard,

All together they went—the youths, the guests  
and the maiden.

Shady the roof overhead of the leaves and the  
twigs and the tendrils,

Leaves of the olive with silvery sparkle in sun-  
beams of Chios,  
Tendrils of grapevines that clasped the twigs  
in tender embraces,  
Hinting of love in a bower to hearts that are  
young, and to old ones.

Hesiod saw with delight the beautiful daughter  
of Homer,  
Every seam of his face was illumed with the  
torches of Eros,  
Fled are the monsters aforetime, ended the battle  
of Titans,  
And the wormwood of words is turning to sweet-  
ness of honey ;  
Glances he cast on the maiden and coined them  
to lines of a poet.  
Singer of Ascra, thou hast forgotten thy tale  
of Pandora !

Also Typtodes beheld in a joy the daughter of  
Homer,  
For the pedagogue too was a man, though dry in  
his learning,  
Dry the vast heap of his learning, but it would  
make a great bonfire,  
If but one little spark would snap from the flamelet  
of Eros,  
Fall on the ponderous pile and suddenly set it to  
blazing.



O Typtodes, pedagogue Chian, what are these  
flashes !

Thou hast forgotten thy letters, forgotten the  
symbols Phœnician.

So they walked and they talked till they came  
to the view of the waters,  
Wondering came they at once to the side of the  
sea everlasting  
Rolling its waves from beyond and beyond, far  
over the vision,  
Over the tremulous line where heaven and earth  
run together,  
Where the God may be seen as he comes and de-  
parts from the mortal.  
Nearest the billow that broke on the beach stood  
the maiden Praxilla,  
Just behind her with look o'er the sea stood  
youthful Hesperion.

All of them gazed at the waves, and thought-  
fully dropped into silence,  
Seeming to peep far over the bound of the bend-  
ing horizon  
Into the realm beyond for a moment, and hear  
its low music,  
Feeling a gentle attunement of soul to the beat  
of the billows,  
Telling the pulse of the world that is coming, the  
world that is going.

List to a voice! a herald is hurrying out of the  
city,  
Running along the white sand of the margin that  
gleamed in the sunshine;  
“Hearken,” he cried, “I announce the approach  
of the sovereign woman,  
Poetess come from the Lesbian isle to pay hom-  
age to Homer.”  
“What! a woman poetic!” broke out old Hesiod  
crabbed,  
With a twinge in his lips as if tasting his words  
that were wormwood,  
With a whirl of his fist as if fighting the Gods  
like a Titan:  
“What new evil is born to the suffering race of us  
mortals!  
This last woman, methinks, is worse, far worse  
than the first one,  
With the gift of her verses she comes, far worse  
than Pandora.”

“Hater of woman!” quickly responded the  
daughter of Homer,  
Why are your Muses women, your own Heli-  
conian Muses?  
Long I have known of you here, I have heard  
that tale of Pandora,  
Shameless! you have in that tale besmirched the  
mother that bore you.”

Off slipped the poet of Ascra through a lone  
path by the sea-shore,  
Thinking to catch some vessel awaiting the breezes  
for Hellas,  
Eager to quit the sunshine of Chios for heavy  
Bœotia,  
Leaving the Gods of Olympus, to dwell once more  
with the Titans.  
Surly he sauntered along by himself till he  
passed out of vision,  
Hapless poet of Ascra, dismissed by the daughter  
of Homer.

Meanwhile the rest of the people went back  
from the sea to the garden,  
Where they sat down on the stones which were  
seats for the guests in a circle,  
Waiting to hear the first notes of the beautiful  
songstress of Lesbos,  
And with a festival high and a hymn to receive  
her with honor.

VIII.

Thalia.

*The Songstress of Lesbos.*

(149)

## ARGUMENT.

*The person heralded is Sappho, a poetess of the island of Lesbos, and ancestress of the later more famous Sappho. She had caught from Homer the spirit of song in her youth, and now she comes to tell him her gratitude for what he had done. She thinks that Homer, through his story of Helen, had helped to save all women of Greece, herself included, from the fate of Helen. She crowns Homer with a garland for his other pictures of noble women, those found in the Odyssey. At this point the daughter of Homer steps forward and asks Sappho concerning a secret. Hesperion, who has listened to the songstress and has heard her songs before, comes forward and asks a similar question. The result is, the two lovers are brought together through Sappho, the poetess of love. But they are suddenly separated by the warning sound of a trumpet.*

Who could it be that had come from the  
neighboring island of Lesbos,  
Lovely island of love, and the home of the lyre  
of Hellas?

It was Sappho, beautiful Sappho, poetess tender,  
Singing ancestress of many a Sappho still greater  
than she was,

Sister own of the Muses, the sister too of the  
Graces,

Breathing the heart of her sex into strains of the  
sweetest of music,

Bearing the beautiful name to be borne by her  
children hereafter,

Sappho, melodious Sappho, first name of the  
songstress of Hellas.

(151)

Many a Lesbian woman she gave of her  
musical dower,  
Tunefully sharing the gift of her song to the soul  
that might need it,  
All of them singing of love with the joy, the  
triumph, the sorrow,  
Tasting the magical drop which wings with a word  
the sweet senses —  
Lesbian bees that lit on each beautiful flower  
of nature,  
Busily culling in song the bitter-sweet honey of  
passion.

Sappho already had sung for the prize in a  
contest with Homer,  
Years ago that was, when she was the bloom  
of a morning,  
But when he was a noonday turning and looking  
to sundown.  
Both of them sang before judges — the prize was  
a new-made tripod,  
Fashioned to life by Chalcon with dexterous  
strokes of the hammer,  
That it seemed ready to step and to walk while  
standing forever.  
High and mighty the judges taken from lords  
of the islands,  
And from rulers of cities on mainland, all of  
them greybeards;  
Rigid and just they were deemed in settling dis-  
putes of the people,

Rigid and just were the judges, and still she had  
won before singing.  
See but the gleam of her eye, no furrow of frost  
can resist it!  
Every heart she had won by her look, and away  
went the tripod;  
She herself was the song that sang more sweetly  
than Homer,  
Love and beauty were hers while singing of love  
and of beauty,  
She was the prize herself, the prize of the Gods  
to the winner.  
No true Greek could ever behold her, not hoping  
possession.  
So the tripod she easily won from the first of  
the poets,  
By the decree of the judges, whose law she took  
in her triumph,  
Took too the hearts of the greybeards along,  
and they could not help it;  
Homer himself in their place had not given  
another decision,  
Homer had turned against Homer, had he been  
one of the judges.

But to-day she harbored no thought to tell of  
that triumph,  
Rather ashamed she was, for she knew the power  
that gave it.



Years had brought to her life the golden return  
of their harvest,  
Still not chilling the warmth and the glow of the  
Lesbian summer.  
Not too young in her folly, not too old in her  
wisdom,  
Almost repentant her spirit looked out on the  
world from its windows,  
Casting its glances adown as if it had a con-  
fession.  
Stately she moved, yet modest, into the presence  
of Homer;  
Courteous welcome he gave to the songstress,  
when she began speaking,  
Not in her own soft cadence, but tuned to the  
sweep of his measures:

“Thee, O fatherly singer, I come to visit in  
Chios,  
Chios, thy beautiful island, fair sister it is to my  
Lesbos;  
I would behold thee once more in the living form  
of thy features,  
Ere thou pass to Elysian fields, last home of the  
poets,  
Who shall dwell as spirits beyond in the house of  
their genius,  
House of high fantasy built, material stronger  
than granite,

Holding eternal the echo of musical strains of the  
singer.

There among thine own Heroes, there abiding  
forever,

Thou the Hero shalt be thyself — in the deed the  
first Hero ;

For of all thy great people of song, thou sing-  
ing art greatest,

Singing high actions of men thine action itself is  
the highest.

There I too, a poet mid happy Elysian meadows,  
Hope in the sound of thy song with thee to be  
living immortal.

But to-day I have come once more in the sun-  
shine to listen,

I would hear thee again this side of the pitiless  
earth-stream,

And would speak thee a word — not to thee but  
to me it is needful,

Bringing thy soul nearer mine — the word of  
sweet recognition.”

“ Aye, it is sweet, that word,” interrupted the  
poet good-humored,

“ Even to age it is sweet, for myself I do not  
deny it ;

More I would hear of thy strain, so deftly thou  
turnest thy measures.”

Seeing herself reflected in Homer, the song-  
stress continued :

“ Long ago I first heard thee attune the high lay  
in my Lesbos,  
I was a girl in my home, and thou wert a wan-  
dering minstrel,  
Who went singing through Hellas the wrath of  
the Hero Achilles,  
Singing the fateful, dolorous tale of the beautiful  
woman,  
Wandering, singing, and tuning thy song to the  
hearts of the Hellenes.  
Helpful thou spakest to me in the bloom and the  
peril of girlhood,  
Mighty thy voice in my heart just then in the  
struggle of woman ;  
At thy command my soul was set free and broke  
forth into measures,  
Irresistible measures of longing in Lesbian music.  
Secretly sang I my earliest notes to a circle of  
maidens,  
Who would listen and love along with the tender  
vibrations,  
Singing the strains of the song and touching the  
strings of the cithern.  
That was after I heard thee hymning the story of  
Helen,  
How she was blinded and sank in the spell of  
sweet Aphrodite,  
Though the Goddess she fought and rated with  
heavy reproaches ;

How by Paris of Troy she then was led from her  
husband,  
Going, unwilling to go, and yielding though  
always refusing,  
Driving the Trojan away, yet drawing him back  
by denial,  
No was the word of her tongue, but Yes the  
response of her action."

Here she stopped for a moment and looked  
abashed at her daring,  
Thought unspoken when born into speech has in  
it a demon,  
Who oft leaps from the sound of the word and  
frightens the speaker,  
Till the courage returns to speak out the heart  
of the matter.  
Poetess was the Lesbian, having the right to her  
color,  
Having the duty to utter the truth of herself in  
her singing;  
Warm were the tones and strong were the tints  
of the thoughts that she painted;  
Though her words seemed growing forbidden,  
courageous began she:  
"Must I confess it? Helen I felt in myself at  
that moment!  
All of the bliss and the blight of her love swept  
over my heart strings,

Touching them lightly at first, then smiting them  
harder and harder,  
As if I were a lyre by fingers of Fates to be  
played on,  
Thrilling to music the ebb and the flow of the  
ocean within me,  
Making the billowy passion sing to a measure  
responsive!  
Willing unwilling, fated yet free, to myself but  
a battle!  
Yes, I confess, the Goddess I felt, the Goddess  
resistless,  
Driving me forward to do as did the beautiful  
woman,  
Whispering dulcet commands in words of divin-  
ity's power.  
Yet Aphrodite but spoke to what was within me  
already,  
Willing, unwilling, fated yet free — ye Gods, how  
she smote me!  
Till through the cleft of my heart I could see  
down, down to its bottom!  
With the prize of the fairest, the penalty too has  
been given,  
With the beautiful women is chained the spite of  
a Fury,  
Who doth secretly lurk in the gift of the Gods to  
the mortal.  
But I stand not alone, for all I now stand in thy  
presence:

Every wife in Lesbos, in Chios, in all the Greek  
islands,  
And on mainland too, through Hellas, through  
midland of Argos,  
Far in the isles of the West and over the sea to  
the sundown,  
Has that danger of Helen, the lapse of the soul  
in its loving,  
With the vengeance that follows the joy and the  
glory of beauty.  
In thy story a witness I was of all that I might  
be,  
Saw the dread ghost of myself and fled from the  
horrible specter!  
Homer, my father, thou hast saved me from be-  
ing a Helen,  
In thy song thou hast suffered and saved all men  
and all women  
Winning thy soul to themselves in its story of  
trial and rescue.  
I had been taken to Troy, if thy word had never  
been spoken,  
All the daughters of Greece thou hast rescued  
from fleeing with Paris,  
Though his city has fallen, again he had come to  
Achæa,  
Were it not that thy song keeps the warning alive  
and the judgment.  
Troy still stands in the world and holds in its  
citadel Helen,

Only in song, thy song, is it taken forever, O  
Homer."

There she stopped on the height of her thought,  
the Lesbian songstress,  
Whence she could see far over the sky-bound  
limit of Hellas;  
Soon in sweet low tones responded the poet  
prophetic:

"Gracious words thou hast spoken and dear to  
me, beautiful woman;  
Singing the peril of beauty in soft, warm words  
of thy measures;  
Muse among Muses the tenth for thy strain hence-  
forth I shall name thee,  
Aye, for thy love the tenth Muse I shall name  
thee to nations hereafter,  
Who thy honor will sing beyond the far streams  
of the Ocean,  
First of the women of Hellas to build the melo-  
dious poem,  
Chastely chanting thy lay to the wives and maid-  
ens of Lesbos.  
Thou wilt be followed by thousands of songsters  
along down the ages,  
Thine is the musical prelude of forests of night-  
ingales singing.  
Women preserve the story and song as they  
nourish their infants,

Who must be reared on the voice as well as the  
milk of the mother;  
Nature makes her sing, she must die or sing to  
her baby;  
Motherly harmony is her first gift to her child,  
and the greatest.  
What a world I see rising before me, the world  
of the woman!  
Beautiful Helen again shall be sung, aye, more,  
she shall sing too,  
Taking herself Troy town, not conquered but  
conquering Paris;  
She shall be the new Hero Achilles, in action  
heroic,  
Gods! as I see I must speak! she also shall be  
the new Homer."

Down fell the word like a blow, surprising  
even the speaker,  
Who by the spur prophetic was driven beyond  
his own knowledge;  
But on the spot she snatched up the talk, that  
Lesbian songstress,  
For she still had a weight on her heart to be  
lifted by speaking:  
"How we look at ourselves in thy tale of the  
beautiful woman!  
Our warm heart thou hast felt, its ready response  
and the peril.



All our circle is drawn, the trial, the fall and the  
sorrow,  
Then the return of the soul, the rise and the  
grand restoration ;  
Helen estranged is restored to her own, restored  
to herself too.  
In her marvelous tale I can see the past and the  
future,  
All the life of our people unfold to the story  
of Hellas.  
But still more than Hellas I watch in the lines of  
her image : —  
This whole round of existence on earth, hard  
destiny human,  
With the rise and the drop in the struggle of good  
and of evil,  
Now on the up and now on the down of the life-  
stroke eternal,  
Measuring cycles of pain and of gain to the beat  
of the master.”

Here she stopped for a moment, lost in the  
reach of her thinking,  
Which ran over the bounds of her speech in the  
stress of her spirit;  
Soon again she came back to herself and spoke  
Greek unto Homer :  
“Not alone the rise from the fall, thy beautiful  
Helen,

But the woman unfallen is also thy gift to us  
women —

She who never could lapse from herself in trial  
the sorest.

Now let me crown thy brow with this wreath for  
Penelope faithful,

For Arete, the mother, who dwells in the heart  
of her household,

For Nausicaa too, the maid of all maidens for-  
ever.

Take this gift from thy children, thou art the  
father of Hellas!

Which has been born to thy song and trained to  
the step of thy music,

Which will go singing thy strains down Time, in  
joy and in sorrow,

With the echo repeating itself in all nations, O  
Homer."

Thus spake Sappho, the soft-speaking Sappho,  
sweet Lesbian songstress,

Graceful she stepped, and loving she laid on his  
temples the garland,

Plucked by her hand and wove to a crown of the  
leaves of the laurel.

Echoing shouts of approval rang back from the  
hills and the sea-shore,

Even the wavelets, trying to walk, had come up  
to the bank-side,

Trying to talk had murmured afar their billowy  
answer.  
Sweetly the rhythm she spoke, her spirit had  
caught it from Homer,  
And the heroic hexameter yielded to lips of a  
woman,  
Tamed by her gentle caress into lines of mel-  
liferous movement,  
Though it was used to the clangor and clash of  
the onset of battle.  
Now the poet has heard in tenderest tones of the  
songstress,  
Touched with Lesbian tints, the tune of his own  
mighty measure  
Softened quite to the whisper of love in its deli-  
cate cadence,  
Sung in praise of himself for singing the praises  
of woman,  
Showing her highest worth, not sparing her blame-  
ful in error.  
Fairest reward of the bard, when he harks to the  
heart of his verses  
Beating out of a bosom that throbs in a joy to his  
music,  
Flowing from lips that he loves, like a soft suc-  
cession of kisses.

But behold! another fair woman steps up to  
the front-line,

Forward she moves to that presence, it is the  
daughter of Homer,  
Who in a gleam of her sunshine embraces the  
songstress of Lesbos,  
And then speaks in low tones what her looks al-  
ready are telling:  
“Thou hast uttered the word of my heart to thy  
music, O Sappho,  
Word which often has beaten the wall of my lips  
for deliverance,  
Always in vain, for left to myself I never can  
say it;  
But in the warmth of thy speech I can feel the  
hot beat of my bosom,  
And that struggle of thine and of Helen’s has  
sung me my battle.  
Deep is the joy of my soul, and yet I have with  
it a trembling,  
I have given myself all away, and yet I must  
keep me,  
Sweet is every moment of life, and yet it is  
bitter.  
What is this riddle of pleasure in pain and of  
pain in pleasure?  
Would I might fly from myself, and yet to my-  
self I would fly then.  
Tell me the great surrender which will restore me  
my freedom,  
Speak it again, the magical word, the word of my  
weal now,

Overmaking me wholly in hope of the time of  
my ransom.  
I would bathe in the stream of thy song as in  
waters of healing,  
At thy voice my full heart which before had been  
closed, is open,  
Like the flower which bursts at the breath of the  
spring from its bud-coat,  
Still unwilling to show at first what is hid in its  
bosom."

What does this mystery mean which lurks in  
the speech of the maiden?  
Not quite clear to herself is the meaning of what  
she has uttered ;  
Nearer the Lesbian songstress she drew, confid-  
ing in glances,  
Then in a whisper she spake, the beautiful daugh-  
ter of Homer,  
Clinging to Sappho, soft-speaking Sappho, the  
helper of love-pain :  
" Tell me the story once more thou hast told so  
often already,  
I can hear it again from thy lips and never grow  
weary,  
I would hearken thy heart and live in the strains  
of its music ;  
Sappho, O Sappho, what is this love of the youth  
and the maiden,

Which thou singest in hundreds of songs to the  
sónorous cithern?"

Scarce had ended the speech when both were  
aware of another  
Who had entered their thought and stood by  
himself in their presence;  
Both looked hastily up, it was the fair youth  
of the Northland  
Ready to speak, and his glances held the two  
women asunder,  
Since the one of them blushed, and the other  
drew back in amazement;  
Warm was his accent, though neither Ionic,  
Æolic, nor Doric;  
Well he could say what he wanted and spake  
to the Lesbian songstress:  
"Thou hast uttered the word of my heart to thy  
music, O Sappho;  
I a stranger am here from afar, from the realm  
of the frost-gods,  
Thy warm breath I have felt as it wafted in words  
from thy poems,  
All the winter within me has melted, and I am  
the summer,  
Tender summer of Hellas attuned to the lyre of  
Lesbos.  
All the ice of the North to-day thou hast thawed  
from my bosom,

As thou toldest thy tale in the tale of the beautiful woman;  
Helen I was myself, and I sank in the spell of her passion,  
But I was also her spouse, to Troy I would march for my Helen;  
Aye, the Greek I must win, or myself I shall lose forever."

Here he stopped for a sigh, then passed to an undertone softly:  
"What is this fearful joy, and yet an agony with it  
Which allows no rest in the pain that is born of its pleasure?  
Sweet is every moment of life, and yet it is bitter;  
I had given myself all away, before I had known it;  
Tell me the cause of this hungering lingering longing for something —  
Sappho, O Sappho, what is this love of the youth and maiden,  
Which thou singest in hundreds of songs to the sonorous cithern?"

Smiling she touched the amorous chords with the tip of her finger,  
Softly preluding the tones which turned into words in her answer:

“ Both of you have the same pain, and both of  
you have the same pleasure,  
Both of you sing the one song which runs to the  
very same ending ;  
Even the words of your lips I notice are pairing  
together,  
Yes, young people, I think I can tell you concern-  
ing this matter,  
Old is the tale to the old, yet ever is new to the  
youthful,  
But to the poet it never can wear off the gleam  
of its freshness.  
Much in myself I have studied the cause and the  
cure of this trouble ;  
What in longing is sighing asunder, the word  
brings together,  
Hear me, then, both of you, daughter of Homer  
and son of the Northland :  
Two are still twain and in pain, who were born  
to be one and one only.  
Give me two hands — I shall join them to one in  
mine own at a heart-beat.”

Sappho set down her sonorous shell, to the pair  
she drew nearer,  
Till between them she stood and secretly reached  
out on both sides,  
Took two hands in her own and laid them willing  
together,



Which of themselves, with a grip like Fate, were  
    clasped in a promise,  
While the eyes at each other shot fiery ratification.  
Meantime the songstress was chanting a lay of  
    the doings of Eros,  
Singing for others she sang to relieve her own  
    heart of its travail,  
For the old wound, broken open, could only be  
    stanchèd by the love-song.

Hark! the sound of a trumpet rolls over the  
    hills in the distance!  
What can it mean, interrupting this moment of  
    joy by a startle?  
There! once more it is rolling, it sends on its  
    waves a light shudder.  
Each let go the firm grip of the hand in the shock  
    of the warning.

But the daughter has gone and whispered aside  
    to her father;  
What did she say to him there as she leaned to  
    his ear with her blushes?  
Joyful he was at the word and louder he spoke  
    than a whisper:  
“Happy I am — I have it foreseen — let me  
    pledge you together;  
Sorrowful too — ye both have to leave me behind —  
    leave Hellas;

Still I feel you will take me along to the land of  
the future,  
Aye, you will take our Hellas along and preserve  
it forever."

Louder, nearer, sterner, resounded the blast of  
the trumpet,  
Bearing command it seemed and bidding to wait  
for the message ;  
Still no person appeared, but a ruler was surely  
behind it,  
For authority spoke unworded in tones of the  
trumpet,  
Strangely attuned to the roll of the thunder, the  
voice of the Heavens.

In response to the note of forewarning spake  
Homer prophetic:  
"Nay, not yet, not yet — the tie is not yet to be  
fastened,  
First this flame must be curbed and subdued to  
the oracle coming,  
Else it will burn down the world, like Troy, in a  
grand conflagration ;  
No more Helens — one Helen is surely enough  
for all ages —  
Bravely renounce the sweet thought, and prove  
yourselves worthy, renouncing ;  
Bravely renounce and renounce till the law hath  
declared its fulfillment."

Louder responded to Homer the blast of the  
ominous trumpet,  
Louder, nearer it rolled and mingled its sound  
with his sentence.  
As if giving the strength of its stroke to the  
words of the poet,  
Who still added his warning to souls that might  
be impatient:  
“Something else is announced, the best is to  
wait for the message;  
It is near — the tramp can be heard — now wait  
for the message.”

IX.

**Polyhymnia.**

*The Psalmist of Israel.*

(173)

## ARGUMENT.

*David, King of Israel, comes to visit Homer, having heard the songs of the Greek poet sung by Mesander, born in Cyprus, a Hellene and a representative of his race, the Hellenes (pronounced as two syllables) among Semitic peoples — Phœnicians and Hebrews. The two great poets sing for each other, and in their songs they give the Greek and the Hebrew views of the world. The poems of Homer and the psalms of David have just been written in the new alphabet of Phœnician letters; Typodes and Mesander have copies of the two works. David and Homer sing several times, each recognizes the greatness and worth of the other. They become warm friends, as from Chios they look out upon the future to the westward. Hesperion and Praxilla are betrothed, and King David stays to take part in celebrating the marriage on the morrow.*

Suddenly after the sound of the trumpet that  
rolled from the mountain  
Followed a wave of deep voices of song that  
swayed to the sea-swell,  
Choiring in tune to the strings of the harp and  
the tones of the timbrel,  
Mid the clash of the cymbals and drum, and the  
clangor of cornets,  
Loudly preluding new strains to be joined to the  
music of Hellas,  
First to-day, where rises melodious Chios in  
billows,  
Chios, the beautiful island, whose eye is the gar-  
den of Homer.  
Slowly a caravan wound through sinuous turns  
of the mountain,

(175)

Shone as it rolled into vision out of the azure  
horizon ;  
Over the hilltops it heaved, it seemed to be hung  
from the heavens !  
Gaily it glistened afar with the gleam of its gold  
and its purple ;  
Precious stones of the East, the onyx, the opal,  
the diamond,  
Peeped with a thousand eyes from the front of  
the column advancing,  
Peeped and sparkled and shot in a dance with the  
sunbeams of Chios.

“ What high pomp of a monarch is that and  
where is he going ? ”  
Each one asked of his neighbor, who gave no re-  
sponse to the question,  
For he knew nothing to say, but stood and gazed  
in his wonder.  
Statelier moved the procession while nearer it  
came, still nearer,  
Till it had reached to the door where inside was  
sitting Homerus,  
Sitting not far from the hearth by the altar he  
made for the Muses,  
With his soul in a song he sat there and heard  
what was coming.

Royally rode forth a man, dismounted and  
stood at the entrance,

All the radiant train of his followers with him  
dismounted ;  
What a spangle of gems and twinkle of jewels  
like starlight !  
Dark was the eye and crispy the hair and brown  
the complexion,  
Strong was the curve of the nose of the King,  
like the beak of an eagle,  
As it darts from its fastness of rock on the cowering  
rabbit.  
Yet how soft lay his lip underneath the fierce  
hook of the nostrils  
As if nought but compassion he knew, and could  
utter love only !  
Merciful downward to earth and prayerful upward  
to heaven  
Ran his glances, while under them glowed the fire  
of his daring.  
In a lofty obeisance he raised up finger to forehead,  
Jeweled lightnings leaped from his hand to the  
eyes of beholders,  
Making them blink in the flash, and answer the  
sport of the sparkles.  
Then he murmured low tones of a something in  
syllables foreign,  
To the man who stood at his side, and who  
seemed to be waiting,  
Eager to let the fountain of speech gush up to  
the sunlight.



That was a different man from the rest of the  
men of the Monarch;  
Not the same turn of the features he had, and not  
the same stature;  
He was named Mesander — the versatile, clear-  
toned Mesander,  
Knower of speech, reconciler of men, interpreter  
famous,  
He was the tongue of the King who bade him tell  
of the journey.  
Hark! he is speaking, now list to his voice! his  
words are Hellenic!  
Thus he spoke in the rhythm and speech familiar  
to Homer:

“ Hail to thee, poet, thou song of the West,  
and also its prophet!  
Humbly we pray thee to give us to-day a glimpse  
of thy treasures,  
And of our own we gladly shall grant what we  
can in requital.  
This high Monarch has heard thy strains in the  
home of his people,  
Over the roar of the seas, beyond Phœnician  
Sidon,  
Where dwells Israel's seed in the holy land of  
Judea.  
In his palace he listened with pain to the sorrows  
of Priam,  
Deeply forefeeling in Troy and its fall the fate  
of his city,

Sacred Jerusalem, set on a hill by good Abraham's children.

Also he followed in hope the devious path of Ulysses,

In whose return he beheld the return of his people from bondage,

When they fled through the sea and the wilderness drear out of Egypt.

High beat the wish in his heart and rose to a longing resistless,

Thee to behold, the singer of Hellas — he too is a singer —

Ere the dark Fates of Death shall clutch thee and hale thee to Hades.

He has stepped down from his throne to pay thee a visit of honor,

Leaving his own far away, he has come to the country of Javan,

Turning the point of his law, which keeps him aloof from the stranger.

Greatest of musical Hellenes, thou, the voice of the Muses

Singing forever down time and making thy language eternal,

Homer, before thee stands Israel's sovereign, singer, King David."

Such were the words of Mesander, the embassy's eloquent spokesman,  
He in Cyprus was born, and long he had lived with Phœnicians,

Learning their manners and speech, when he  
came as sailor to Sidon ;  
Also he traded with Tyre, when Hiram was king  
of the country,  
Hiram, the King of rich Tyre, the friend and  
ally of David.  
Skillful in talking the tongues, Mesander had  
seen many nations,  
Noting the merits of each, he spoke the language  
of concord,  
Artful in dealing with men, he was often chosen  
as envoy,  
Wandering over the world, as interpreter came  
he to Jewry,  
Even a poet he was and doubly was dear to King  
David.  
But he remained a good Greek, although he was  
born on the border,  
Quite on the line where Shem and Japhet have  
fought for dominion  
All through the ages, and mingled in battle the  
blood of their children.  
Greek though he was, Mesander partook of them  
both in his spirit,  
Sought to keep peace between the combative  
souls of the brothers,  
Sought to make each understand the greatness  
and worth of the other,  
Deftly uniting the East and the West in the  
truth that is common.

Good was the Greek and yet he was vain, the  
showy Mesander  
Called by the envious Hebrew, although beloved  
by King David;  
Vain of his gift he was, of his gift in the tongues  
and in song too.  
How he would strut when he made a good speech,  
or perchance a good verselet !  
He could put on more airs than David and Homer  
together.

When Mesander had spoken, the King looked  
around for a moment ;  
Lo ! he is stopped in his look, he is caught in the  
glance of fair Sappho,  
Tranced by her face and her figure he cried :  
“ What a beautiful woman !  
How would she like to appear in my palace, a  
daughter of Israel,  
Aye, a wife to the King, and a light of Greek  
beauty to Hebrews ! ”  
Sappho looked on the ground, she knew the lan-  
guage of glances,  
Sappho knew the language of love, even when it  
is silent,  
Though she did not understand the Hebrew, the  
language of David,  
And Mesander kept still, for he honored the Les-  
bian songstress.

Then to the words of Israel's Monarch responded  
Homerus,  
" Welcome, O friend, to the isles of the sea, to  
the land of fair Hellas,  
Enter my garden and home, to me thou shalt be  
as a brother !  
Thy great name I have heard, it was borne from  
the realm of Phœnicians,  
By the Tyrian princes who trade in their ships  
with Greek merchants.  
Sweet though faint is the shred of thy song in the  
land of Achæans,  
Floating over the sea from the East to the tune  
of the sunrise.  
How I have longed to list to your Muses, so lofty,  
so holy !  
Now the moment has come ere I pass into pitiless  
Hades ;  
Oft in my heart I have felt you had something I  
had not, but needed.  
Strike the harp ! sing the song ! one burst of your  
heavenly music !  
And of your God I would know through melo-  
dious lips of his servant,  
For we all have need of the God, be he one, be  
he many,  
Dwelling in man and the world, over Hellas en-  
throned or Judea.  
Tell me the story of trials I heard concerning  
your people,

As from bondage it fled with its God from the  
land of the Nile-stream;  
That, methinks, is the story of man, to be told  
him forever,  
Oft repeating itself in his life and the life of the  
nations.  
We the Greeks have also divinely been put under  
training,  
Through sore trial our Gods have tested the love  
of their people,  
Tested our mettle Hellenic to do the grand task  
of the ages;  
Over to Troy we went and we fought ten years  
for our heirship,  
Asia we had to assail that we save our beautiful  
Helen."

Then the dark king of the East laid off his gar-  
ments of purple,  
And a golden harp he took from the hand of its  
holder,  
Harp of ten strings to which he chanted the  
praise of Jehovah.  
Also his voice he essayed in a caroling upward  
and downward;  
Sweet were the tones which he rapidly touched  
in the strains of his prelude,  
Soft were the notes which he secretly hummed  
to himself for the trial,

Gently he glided to words, that wedded the  
tender vibrations,  
Making the measures of song which skillful  
Mesander translated.  
Homer hearkened, laying his soul to the lips of  
King David,  
Who sang Israel's strain till it filled the fair  
garden of Chios:

“Happiest nation of nations I sing, whose  
God is Jehovah;  
Blessed forever and ever the people whom He  
hath chosen,  
Looking down from the heavens the children of  
men He beholdeth,  
Israel's children He loves, but His law is the law  
of the nations.  
Praise Him, my soul, the one holy God, He is the  
Almighty;  
Praise Him, the King of the Kings, the Monarch  
of earth and of heaven,  
Whose thoughts are a great deep, and His right-  
eousness like a great mountain;  
Trust in the Lord and do good, for He laughs at  
the cunning of evil,  
Its keen sword, when drawn against Him, shall  
pierce its own bosom.  
He is the law of the world, which to men He has  
mightily given,

He is the law of the world, and He is also the  
judgment.  
List to His voice as it speaketh aloud in the roll  
of the thunder,  
See Him fold up the sea in His hand like a gar-  
ment of waters,  
Hark how the cedars of Lebanon crash in the  
breath of His anger!  
Hark to His law, ye nations: No other God is  
before me."

In the might of his mood sang the King high  
strains of his language,  
Which Mesander the spokesman turned to the  
speech of Homerus;  
To the hexameter's swing he broke the wild  
cadence of Hebrew,  
Tuning Israel's heavenly flight to the tread of a  
heathen,  
Training in bounds of Greek measure the sweep  
of divine aspiration.  
Oft he had done so before, and now he would  
peep in a scroll there,  
Made of a papery rind of Egyptian reeds from  
the Nile fens,  
Which he held in his hand, scratched over and  
over with scribblings,  
Curious mystical signs which seemed to whisper  
in secret,



Only by him understood was the talk of those  
signs and their meaning,  
Still their voice was not heard, for they talked in  
a flash to his eyesight.

But at last he raised up his eyes and folded his  
writing,  
And in a glow he spoke, that Grecian of Cyprus,  
to Homer :  
“ Give him the roar of thy seas, as they rise like  
Icarian billows,  
Give him the swell of thy heart as it heaves in  
the height of the battle,  
Give him the roll of thy measures in waves of the  
blue Hellespontus ;  
O Mæonides, sing him thy Zeus, the God of the  
Hellenes,  
Father whose children are Gods who come with  
their help to us mortals.  
Sands of the desert below, and glories of Heaven  
above us  
He has sung — now give him thy concord of man  
and the world here,  
Give him thy concert of Earth and Olympus,  
divine and the human,  
And for thee I shall do what for him I have  
done — translate thee.”

Softly Homer began with a prayer that fell  
into measures:

“Zeus, high father of Gods and of men, Olympian father !  
Son thyself of old Cronus, consumer of all of his children,  
Thou has escaped from his maw and dethroned thy pitiless parent,  
Who would be all to himself in the world, without even offspring.  
Hear me, O Zeus, mo the mortal, but loving thy worship and order !  
Not by thyself dost thou rule from the top of snowy Olympus,  
Highest of all thy gifts thou dost share unto others — thy godhood,  
Many divinities sit in a circle majestic around thee,  
Gods and goddesses too are thy sons and thy beautiful daughters,  
Whom thou hast raised to thy heights and with thee hast made to be rulers,  
Ruling the air and the earth and even the underworld sunless,  
Ruling the man in his deed and also his innermost spirit.  
Still thou art ever the first among many, in mind and in power,  
And in authority over the Gods thou art surely the sovereign,  
Let any deity dare to question thy might for a moment,

Down to black Tartarus whirls he to sit with the  
hopeless Titans.’’

Skillful Mesander now did his best to turn this  
to Hebrew,  
Toning a word here and there to suit the fine ear  
of King David,  
Fitting to music the thought, as it flowed from  
the heart of the singer;  
But in spite of his skill, the translation ran rough  
in hard places.  
Free Greek speech would not always dance to  
the tune of Semitic,  
Homer’s hexameters broke in the back at the  
gait of the psalm-song,  
And the Monarch would scowl when he heard of  
the Gods in the plural,  
Yet he would smile to himself at the noise about  
beautiful Helen,  
For the God of the King must be one, though his  
wives may be many;  
Gods of the Greek may be many, his wife is the  
one, the one only,  
Whom to save he is ready to fight ten years with  
the Orient.

Sly Typtodes had slipped up behind and  
peeped into the papers  
Which the interpreter held in his hand when his  
reading had ended ;

Then began to address him in whispers the pedagogue prying:

“What is that script which I see, that strange miraculous scribbling?

Have you too the mystical writ of symbols Phœnician?

Mighty it will be forever, preserving both David and Homer,

Rescued from sounds of the voice and fixed into signs for the vision.

And the schoolmaster now will have work in each new generation,

Teaching the name and the shape and the sound of the wonderful letters,

Till they together be put into words, the holders of all things.

Then the pupil will spell out the deed and the thought of aforetime,

Spurred by the sprig of the laurel held in the hand of the teacher.

That I call progress, that is the march of mankind to the better!

Nor will it stop till every youth in the land knows the letters,

Every youth in the world must know the Phœnicians symbols.”

Ere Typtodes had done, strong currents had drowned out his whisper,

Strong loud currents of song that rose from the  
throat of the singer,  
Overflowing all bounds of the sea when the tide  
runs the highest,  
And it came from the fathomless heart of Israel's  
psalmist:  
" Praised be Jehovah, in Him is our trust, the  
God of our Fathers,  
From everlasting to everlasting He is the ruler!  
In the land of Egypt we toiled and we wept in  
our sorrow,  
Slaves were Jacob's children, but they were  
never forgotten,  
From the slime of the Nile we fled to the shore  
of the Red Sea,  
Always we saw a great hand reach out of the  
cloud round about us,  
Smiting the chains of our bondage and pointing  
the way of our rescue.  
Through the walls of the waters we crossed dry-  
shod on the bottom,  
Long in the wilderness forward and backward in  
trial we wandered,  
Till we returned to our home, the primitive home  
of our Fathers,  
Bearing the law in our hearts, which was given in  
thunders at Sinai.  
Sing, O my soul, the high song, the return to  
the land of our promise,

Sing it for me and for mine, and for wandering  
millions hereafter,  
Millions on millions unborn, the countless sons of  
the future."

As he ended he turned to Hesperion, child of  
the Northland,  
Into whose shadowy semblance he peered in a  
wonder while singing,  
For that youth had the face among faces which  
look at the speaker,  
Drawing him always secretly back to the spell of  
its gazes,  
Back to itself it draws him, unconscious of magical  
power,  
Showing him dreamlike glimpses of something  
afar that is coming.  
Thus the youth of the North attracted the look  
of King David,  
Who seemed glancing into futurity throned in  
that visage,  
Far-off futurity throned in the visage of dreamful  
Hesperion,  
As he stood there beside the beautiful daughter  
of Homer,  
Who all the future had read in the soft blue eyes  
of the stranger,  
Dreamful Hesperion, lately arrived from the  
snows of the Northland.

Soon the poet of Hellas began once more full  
of fervor,  
Gently attuning his note somewhat to the music  
of David:  
“Singer, thou art of the East, but thy strain  
belongs to the West too,  
In it I hear the same voice that to me is the voice  
of the Muses,  
By whose help I also have sung the return of my  
people,  
That was the sad return of the haughty victori-  
ous Argives,  
Coming from Troy in their ships to their homes  
on island and mainland;  
Many were lost through wrath of the Gods, but  
the faithful were rescued,  
Though the path was doubtful and long that lay  
on the waters.  
Lately I finished the tale which tells the return of  
Ulysses,  
Who on the passionate sea had to wander with  
foolish companions;  
Much he endured in his heart, and much he  
doubted in spirit,  
Till he came back to his Ithacan home, to Pene-  
lope prudent,  
Where in peace he dwelt till the Fates had spun  
out his life-thread.  
Great the return of Israel, hymning itself in all  
peoples,

Great the return of Achæa, which also will not  
be forgotten.  
Different may be our speech, but one at last is  
the meaning,  
Different may be our blood, but it all responds to  
one heart-beat,  
Different may be our Gods, but the Man is the  
same in us both here."

Spoken the winged word, uprose divinely  
Homerus,  
Reaching out with his fingers, he felt for the  
hand of King David,  
Trip-hammer strokes of his heart beating time  
to the voice of the Muses:  
"Mortals may blame the Gods for their ill, but  
it is their own folly,  
Through themselves they must perish, ere Gods  
are able to smite them,  
Até is sent for by man, else even the Gods could  
not send her,  
What through man the divinities do, is also his  
doing,  
His is the deed, though the world is divine in  
which he can do it.  
But the one deity truly is thine, the God of the  
ages,  
All shall pass away, but He abideth forever.  
Hear my prophecy, hear it and weigh it, con-  
cerning two poets



Standing in Chios and looking afar on the worlds  
in the sunset;  
One shall lift up the soul from below to the pres-  
ence immortal,  
And will quicken the heart to worship, unseen,  
the Eternal;  
But the other will show the trial and triumph of  
Heroes,  
Singing into his strains the homage undying of  
beauty.  
Both as brothers shall go down the echoing hall  
of the ages.  
Echoing double one voice from the heart of  
Greece and Judea.  
Two are the aisles in the temple of song, Hellenic,  
Hebraic,  
One is the harmony under them both, the har-  
mony human,  
Tuning to musical life the Man and the God in  
their struggle."

Slowly the poet of Hellas drew back to his seat  
in the settle,  
But his mind ran on in its might, though his body  
was weary,  
And he continued: "One thing more my spirit  
must tell thee,  
Hear now my prayer, O David, and call it the  
prayer of Homer:

May the son ever be a much better man than his  
father!"

At the thought he suddenly turned and seemed  
to be looking,  
Though he was blind, he seemed to be looking and  
prying about him :  
" But I forget ! I have a new pupil, where is he ?  
Hesperion ?  
Where is Hesperion, dreamful youth of the neb-  
ulous Northland ?  
And I forget too my daughter, where is she ?  
Praxilla ? Praxilla ?  
Surely to-day she is roaming, my daughter, my  
sunny Praxilla ! "

In a moment the crowd was moving and turning  
and looking,  
All would peep at the pair whom the poet had  
coupled together ;  
What he had joined in his words, they surmised  
he had joined in his thoughts too,  
Every boy in the school surmised what was going  
to happen,  
Every boy in the school blushed red as if he were  
guilty,  
Guilty of hiding away in his heart an arrow of  
Eros,  
Which had pricked him with jealousy's pang,  
though slyly secreted.

First he peeped for his rival, but found no reward  
for his peeping,  
Saw no Hesperion, dreamful youth of the neb-  
ulous Northland,  
Then he would speak in low tones to his neigh-  
bor, who had to make answer;  
Each was disguising the timorous thought that  
trembled within him,  
Each was telling it too just through his careful  
disguises;  
Soon the whole school was a whisper, asking:  
Where is Praxilla?  
Soon the whole school was a whisper, replying,  
Where is Hesperion?

Crabbed Typtodes, the schoolmaster, still  
was present and looking,  
But he nowhere saw what he looked for, the  
daughter of Homer,  
Whom he too would see and would sue in spite  
of his wrinkles;  
Teaching the verses of Homer, he weened he  
could teach the fair daughter,  
Writing Phœnician letters, he thought he would  
write her a poem.  
Vain is the effort, to-day he is wearied and  
worried with waiting;  
In his sandals he shuffles along to the side of  
Mesander,

Whom he somehow thinks to be kin to himself  
in the spirit;

Him he bespeaks on a point quite aloof from the  
way of the lover:

“Long you have dwelt in Phœnicia, you say,  
and know all its learning;

Have you the songs set down in the signs of  
strange Alpha-Beta,

Cunning symbols of speech, that fix the fleet  
breath of the singer?”

“Yes,” responded with joy the dexterous  
spokesman Mesander,

“All have been set down in signs so that we  
can hear them forever

Only by seeing them, look, the cunning Phœni-  
cian symbols!

Thousands of years from now, yea, millions on  
millions of ages,

Men will have but to look on these signs and will  
hear King David,

Magical signs of the word, which make the good  
poem eternal.

I have all of his songs scratched down on the  
folds of this scroll here.”

Lowering still his tone, Typtodes spoke to Me-  
sander,

Confidentially bending his head more near while  
speaking:

“I have noted it well ; while you talked, I peeped  
over your shoulder.  
But I must tell you a secret, which nobody knows  
of in Chios —  
Long I have wrought to set down in these signs  
the poems of Homer ;  
What a task it has been — the burning by drops  
of my heart’s blood !  
It is done, but yesterday done, and to-day I have  
brought it,  
Hid in my bosom ; toilsome the work but I felt  
it was worthy,  
Though I find fault with the failings of Homer  
and slash him to fragments ;  
See ! I have poured out my life into writ, here  
it is, O Mesander—  
One small roll out of many, the rest I shall fetch  
from the school-house,  
One short day out of many, all which have sunk  
into Lethe.”  
“Surely no idler thou art,” said the Greek  
from the island of Cyprus,  
And thou movest along with the world, the  
schoolmaster moves too,  
Spirit needeth the letter, the letter too needeth  
the spirit,  
Homer will last, but the pedagogue Chian will not  
be forgotten,  
Who was the first to put into script the song of  
the poet,

Making him sing forever in spite of the Fates,  
the grim spinners."

Both of the men had still something to say on  
the matter of letters.  
But they suddenly stopped when they heard the  
voice of the poet  
Not now chanting a musical strain to the Gods  
and the Heroes,  
But impatiently calling aloud, "Hesperion!  
Praxilla!"  
Twice he repeated, "Where is Hesperion! Where  
is my daughter?"  
"Here I am on this side," soon spake up the  
youth of the Northland,  
"Here I am on the other," responded the maiden  
Praxilla.  
Both of them spoke in their joy as they suddenly  
sprang from an arbor,  
Where they had hid from the crowd for a moment  
of sweet conversation,  
Words of the twain now blended together to  
tenderest music,  
And their voice was wedded in love, preluding  
the marriage:  
"For thy blessing we come, thy blessing, O  
father Homerus."

Then both kneeled at his side, brave youth and  
beautiful maiden.

“Rapid work, my children, too rapid, and yet  
I confirm it!

Who can catch and turn back in its flight the  
arrow of Eros?

Well I foresaw what was coming, I knew in  
advance the whole story.

Did you think because I was blind, I never could  
see you?

All the while I could see you doing just what I  
intended.

But enough! You have my approval, take now  
my blessing!”

Laying each hand on a head, he rose up with  
them together.

Standing between the twain, once more spoke  
the poet to David:

“Thee I beseech, O Monarch, yet greater than  
Monarch, a Singer,

Stay with me here, for to-morrow is given in  
marriage my daughter;

Go to rest in my chamber and wake up renewed  
in the morning,

Both of us then shall sing together the song of  
the wedding,

Ere we send off the pair to the distant forests of  
Northland.

Thou must give them thy God, the One, and his  
high adoration,

I shall show them the Man, the beautiful Man in  
his freedom.”

X.

Urania.

*The Marriage.*

(201)



## ARGUMENT.

*All come together in the morning for the wedding festival of Hesperion and Praxilla. The scholars have a choral dance in honor of the event; Glaucus and Demodocus confess their great disappointment. Sappho chants for the pair her last measures of love and good wishes. Typtodes brings as his bridal gift the poems of Homer written in the new alphabet. Homer and David give to the pair their blessing and with it their two books, which are to be borne to the new home, whither the happy couple now set forth on their journey.*

Up rose the Sun in his car and lit the Ionian  
heavens,  
Driving the timorous Dawn far over the sea to the  
westward,  
Seeming to mount to the sky in flames that  
burst from his glances  
For some joy that he felt and imparted to earth  
and to ocean.  
Like a bridegroom he rose and put on his gar-  
ments of splendor,  
Gold he was strewing wherever he looked on the  
land and the water.  
Warm was the thrill as he reached from afar  
with his radiant fingers,  
Earth awoke at the touch and sprang up respond-  
ing in music,

(203)

Every creature was singing, even still voices of  
nature  
Chanted the hymn of the Sun as he soared up  
the sky in the morning.  
Purple and scarlet and gold were his regal changes  
of raiment,  
Jewels he flung with his sheen in the lap of the  
beautiful island,  
Which peeped forth from the waves in a smile at  
the sport of the sunbeams,  
As from slumber it woke and lay on the bed of  
the billows.  
Chios he kissed in a rapture, as if his bride he  
were kissing,  
All the heart of the Sun was flowing to love and  
to marriage,  
As he glowed and he glanced down into the gar-  
den of Homer.

Both of the poets had risen from sleep, the  
Greek and the Hebrew,  
And were sitting together, in joy saluting the  
morning,  
Which from earth and from heaven returned the  
high salutation.  
“Beautiful is this world of Jehovah,” shouted  
King David.  
“Praised be his name, for his law is the law which  
endureth forever.”

“ Beautiful is this world of the Gods,” responded  
Homerus,  
“ Beautiful too is the man, divinely upbearing his  
freedom.”

Thus they continued their talk, which ran of  
itself into measure,  
All of their speech was a song, and each of them  
sang to the other.  
Two were the strains on the tongue, yet both  
reached down to one key-note.  
Skillful Mesander translated the twain and added  
his comment.

Soon they all had gathered together with David  
and Homer,  
Hearing the note of the East and the West in the  
words of the masters.  
Lovely Sappho was present, the soft-speaking  
songstress of Lesbos,  
But she was silent, for eagerly now she heard the  
new message,  
Heard the voice of the law as it fell from the  
lips of the psalmist,  
Though she felt that the singer himself was not  
free of its judgment.  
Still in her thought she did not upbraid him who  
rose after falling,  
Nor condemn what her own tender heart had told  
her was human.

Shifty Typtodes, the pedagogue Chian, doth  
    seem to be absent ;  
No, he is coming, yonder he shuffles along in his  
    sandals,  
He has set down the poems of Homer in symbols  
    Phœnician,  
Though he won not the daughter, he must be a  
    guest at her marriage.  
Look ! he hastes up the path, and carries the  
    rolls of his paper,  
Rolls first made of the rind of the fen-born rush,  
    the papyrus,  
On which is written the word of the poet for  
    ages hereafter ;  
Book it is called, the scribbled peelings of rushes  
    of Egypt.

Next were seen the beautiful youths who sang  
    in a chorus,  
Gracefully stepping along, attuning their dance  
    to the song-beat,  
All the youths of the school were there arrayed  
    for the wedding,  
Spotless they shone in white raiment falling in  
    folds to their motion.  
From the East and the West they had come, all  
    joined the procession,  
And they began the high song with a festal pray-  
    er together,

Prayer beseeching the presence divine of the  
God of Espousals:

“Hail Hymenæus, hail! O come to the island  
of Chios,

Come to the glorious island of song that is sing-  
ing thy praises!

Great is the need of thy presence to bless what  
is going to happen,

For the lots of marriage are now to be drawn by  
a maiden,

Rarest of maidens of Hellas, the beautiful daugh-  
ter of Homer.

Be not absent, O deity, rule the caprices of  
Fortune;

Hail Hymenæus, hail! make the tie of the pair  
everlasting!”

David the King drew near, and spake to the  
youth of the Northland,

“Speed thee afar to thy forests, and take this  
maiden Hellenic,

Her thou must win to thy love, for thou never  
canst marry a Jewess,

’Tis not allowed by the law — no hope thou canst  
have for my daughter,

Whom I have left behind with the rest of the  
daughters of Israel;

These we keep to ourselves for the glory and  
praise of Jehovah.

But unrewarded thou shalt not pass from my  
    presence this morning,  
All that is best of myself, whatever is good in  
    my nation,  
I shall give as a present to thee and thy people  
    forever.  
It shall attune thee anew to its song when thy  
    soul is discordant,  
From thy fall it shall lift thee on high with fresh  
    aspiration,  
It shall stead thee in trial the sorest, in death it  
    shall stead thee.  
Now its words have been written in signs that  
    came from Phœnicia,  
Musical sounds of the voice have been set down  
    in signs for the vision  
On that Ægyptian peel of a rush, called Byblus,  
    the Bible.  
We have brought it along on our journey —  
    Where is it, Mesander?"

Here the translator suddenly stopped his talk-  
    ing Hellenic,  
Spoke in Hebrew the word of reply which has  
    not been translated.  
Taking the folds of a curious roll written over  
    with letters,  
Looking the look of a victor, he handed it soon  
    to the Monarch.

Meanwhile trembling in voice spake up good  
father Homerus,  
“ Now may life pass away, the end I have seen of  
my living;  
When his work has been done, not long the  
mortal will tarry;  
More cannot fall to my lot, my hours henceforth  
are a passage;  
After to-day I shall sing no more, the spirit  
refuses;  
Words cannot tell what I think, but bound the  
flight of my vision;  
Life I have loved, for it was a deed, and it was a  
song too,  
But it is done, and the time draws near — the  
time of my silence,  
When the sound of my song will be but an echo  
repeating,  
Ever repeating the voice which I flung on the  
breezes of Hellas.  
Daughter, go; I send thee far off to the folk of  
the Northland,  
Thither now bear my song, for it is my gift to  
the ages;  
May thy children be heirs of the lay and the life  
of Greek Homer.”

Such were the words of the parent, and they  
- were never forgotten.



All of the company present were touched by the  
tone of the farewell,  
For they seemed to hear the refrain of a lay in  
the distance,  
Giving a soft response from beyond to the note  
of the poet,  
Who was singing to-day the last, last strains of  
his swan-song.

Hark to the bardlings ! a youth steps forth from  
the line of the chorus,  
With a discord in look and in heart — it was  
high-born Glaucus,  
Who from Lycia came, and now he sang to the  
maiden :  
“ I have tried to win the hand of the daughter  
of Homer ;  
How I longed to carry her off to the banks of  
the Xanthus,  
Where is my sweet sunny home by the banks of  
the eddying Xanthus !  
Honest my suit was to bear her away once more,  
the Greek Helen,  
Peacefully bring back the beautiful prize of the  
world into Asia ;  
But I have lost, the Gods are against me, and  
turn from my people ;  
All I have lost, I must now see the bride borne  
off to the westward —

I the son of King Glaucus, and grandson of  
Glaucus the Hero,  
I who am sprung far back of the seed of Bel-  
lerophontes —  
Hail, Hymenæus, thy blessing upon the daugh-  
ter of Homer.”

Scarce had he ended, when from the opposite  
side of the chorus  
Stepped forth a youth of the West, in song and  
in love his great rival,  
It was Demodocus, son of Demodocus, Ithacan  
rhapsodè:  
“I too sought for the hand of the beautiful  
daughter of Homer,  
From this isle I would bear her away to the  
home of Ulysses,  
Whence the old Greeks our fathers once came to  
the rescue of Helen.  
Great was the deed they did, the deed of the  
Greeks, our fathers!  
Beautiful Helen again I would rescue in fairest  
Praxilla,  
Coming over the sea from my home to the  
island of Chios.  
I have lost, let me go, I now shall become but a  
swineherd,  
Son unworthy of men who took the citadel  
Trojan.

Hail, Hymenæus, thy blessing upon the daughter  
of Homer."

Forward came Sappho, the Lesbian songstress,  
the tenth among Muses,  
Grace she revealed in her form and her speech,  
the fourth among Graces,  
Aye tenth Muse of the Muses, and aye fourth  
Grace of the Graces,  
As she sang to the pair mid the sweet low tones  
of her cithern :

“Hail, Hymenæus, hail! make happy the  
bride and the bridegroom!  
May the souls of the twain be one thought, the  
two lives be one living!  
Make the marriage a presence, which they shall  
dwell in forever.  
May the love of to-day be also the love of to-  
morrow!  
You, O bride and bridegroom, you too I would  
move by my prayer;  
When you come to your home far over the border  
of Hellas,  
Sappho forget not, who was the first to join you  
together,  
Making the love of your hearts to flow in the  
strains of her music,  
Taking the hands of you both into hers and link-  
ing the promise.

Daughter of Homer and son of the Northland,  
remember the songstress,  
Sappho the Lesbian singing the love of the youth  
and the maiden,  
Hail, Hymenæus ! make the bond of the lovers  
eternal ! ”

Soon Typtodes stepped forth, in his hand were  
the rolls of his writing,  
Faithful he brought the work of his life as his  
gift at the nuptials,  
Though the beautiful daughter he won not with  
all of his wooing.  
But he hath his reward, his gift shall not be for-  
gotten.  
Gruffly with a grimace he muttered : Hail, Hy-  
menæus !  
Into the hand of the poet he put the magical  
symbols.  
Then he withdrew from the place — not the least  
was the schoolmaster's present ;  
As he passed out of sight, he flung down a tear  
on the gravel ;  
Once he looked back at his rolls, his life-task,  
sad at the parting.

Then spake Homer, giving the pair his last bene-  
diction :  
“ Here, take my book, now writ by Typtodes in  
letters Phœnician,

Keep it and let it still grow, one seed of your  
future existence,  
Showing the beautiful world of the Gods which  
arose in our Hellas,  
Showing what man must do with himself to build  
up a freeman."

Then spake David, giving the pair his last ben-  
ediction :

" Here, take my book, it too is written in letters  
Phœnician,

By some scribe — I know not his name — em-  
ployed in my household :

Keep it and let it still grow, one seed of your  
future existence,

Showing the law of the world proclaimed in the  
land of Judea,

Showing the God, the one only God, and his  
worship in spirit."

So to the Northland they took the two books  
of Homer and David,

Oldest and newest, twin books of all time, the  
Greek and the Hebrew,

Lovingly bore them afar to the West, the home  
of the nations,

Which shall kindle the light in their hearts and  
carry it further,

Where the two singers of Eld shall still sing daily  
their wisdom,

Voices resounding in millions of echoes from let-  
ters Phœnician,

Bringing their song to the present and handing it  
on to the future,  
Ever renewing their strains in the soul that is  
ready to hear them,  
Known far better hereafter than ever in Greece  
or Judea.

Then the pair set out — Hesperion son of the  
Northland,  
And Praxilla, fair maiden of Hellas, the daughter  
of Homer,  
Quitting the garden where grew the orange, the  
fig and pomegranate,  
Where the hills were a flutter of leaves of the  
silvery olive.  
Soon they came to the shore, and there lay the  
boat of the bridal,  
Covered with branches and leaves, and decked  
with the flowers of Chios.  
Seamen raised up the mast and steadied it firmly  
with mainstays,  
Then they spread out the sails to the wind and  
took the direction.  
Oars they dipped in the brine, for trial made  
ready the rudder,  
And the God sent a favoring breeze which blew  
from the island,  
Yet a sigh mid the joy of the day it would  
whisper in snatches.  
“Farewell forever, Praxilla my daughter! Fare-  
well Hesperion!”

Light ran the ship as it cut with its keel  
through the billowy waters,  
Laughingly sparkled the sea in the stroke of the  
vigorous oarsmen,  
Over the rise and the fall of the ripples was rock-  
ing the vessel,  
Muffled sang the great deep, upheaving and bear-  
ing its burden.  
“Farewell forever, O Homer, my father! Fare-  
well O Hellas.”

From the shore all the youths of the school  
were gazing in sorrow,  
Merrily still the vessel kept dancing away o’er  
the billow,  
That was the last day of school, the end had  
come of their training;  
Long they looked at the boat until it had van-  
ished from vision,  
Looked in the blue at the sail till lost in the haze  
to the westward,  
Wondering whither it went and whether again  
they would see it.  
When the small white speck of the ship had  
twinkled to nothing,  
Longing the scholars turned for the sight and the  
speech of the poet,  
But he was not to be seen, he had gone to his  
home with King David.  
Soon they too had dispersed, each went his own  
way to his country.

Still the lovers sailed on far away from the gardens of Chios,  
Onward they went in their joy, behind them leaving the islands,  
Over the deep they sailed and came to the shore of the mainland.  
Quitting the ship and the sea, they plunged into forest and desert,  
Into the dangers of land far greater than perils of water,  
Fleeting across the wintry border of beautiful Hellas,  
Where it stretches beyond the abode of the Gods on Olympus,  
To the regions where drinking their whey dwell the mare-milking Thracians,  
Over the hills and the valleys away to the banks of a river,  
To the stream that is bearing the flood of the wide-whirling Istros,  
Still beyond and beyond, still over the plain and the mountain,  
Over vast lands to the seas, and over the seas to the lands still,  
Through the icied forests, through the tracts of the frost-fields,  
Still beyond and beyond, still over the earth and its circles,  
Onward they passed, the daughter of Homer and son of the Northland —



Further and further they went, till they came to  
the homes of his people,  
Bringing two books in their journey, the gifts of  
David and Homer,  
Bringing two songs of the sunrise to sing to the  
lands of the sunset,  
Songs still singing of God in his foresight and  
Man in his freedom,  
Where the huge arms of the breakers are smiting  
the shores of the Ocean,  
Ever beyond and beyond in the stretch of their  
strokes they are striking,  
Striking the barrier of earth in the stress of their  
strong aspiration,  
Beating, forever repeating, the strokes of the in-  
finite Ocean.











